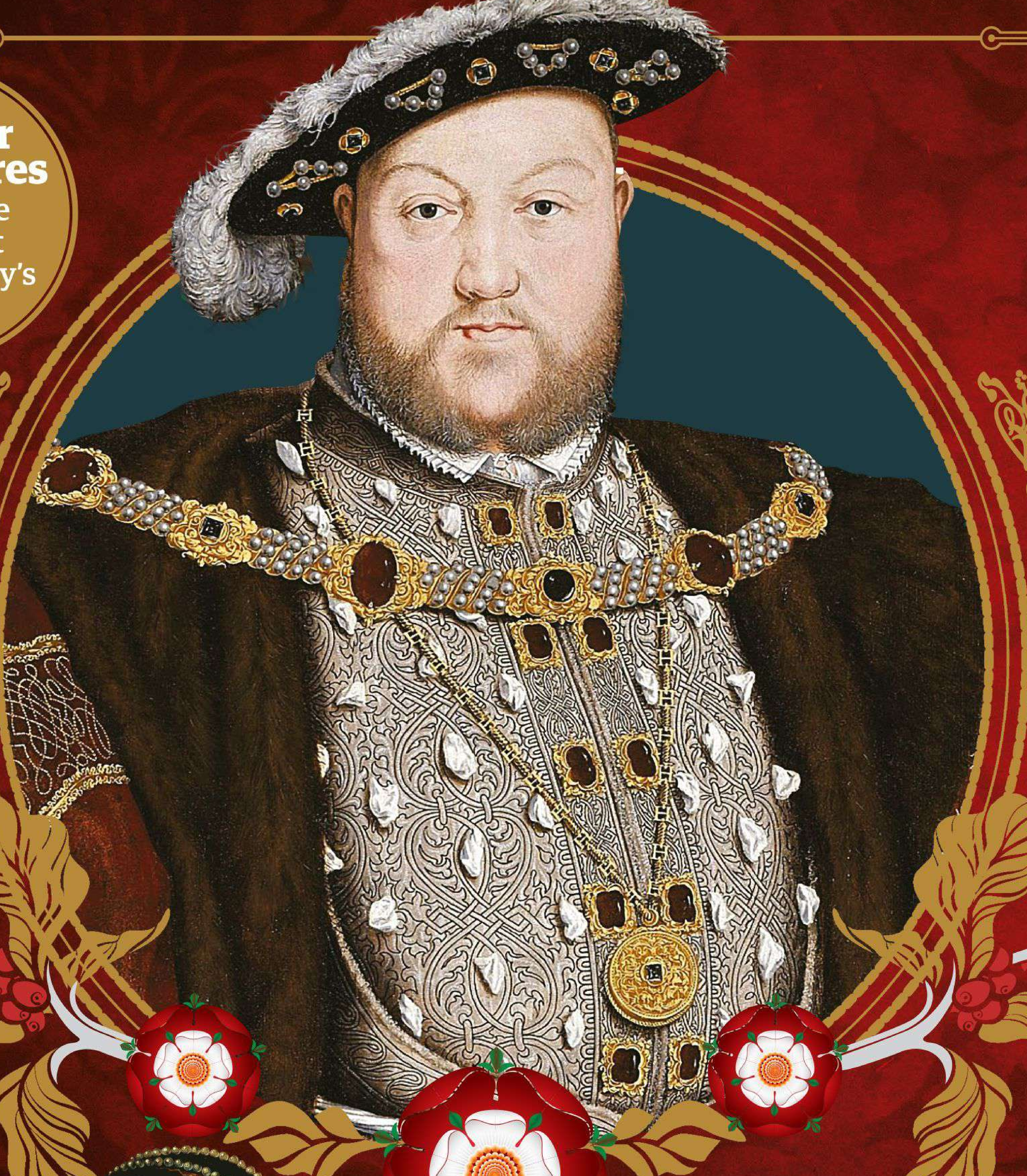
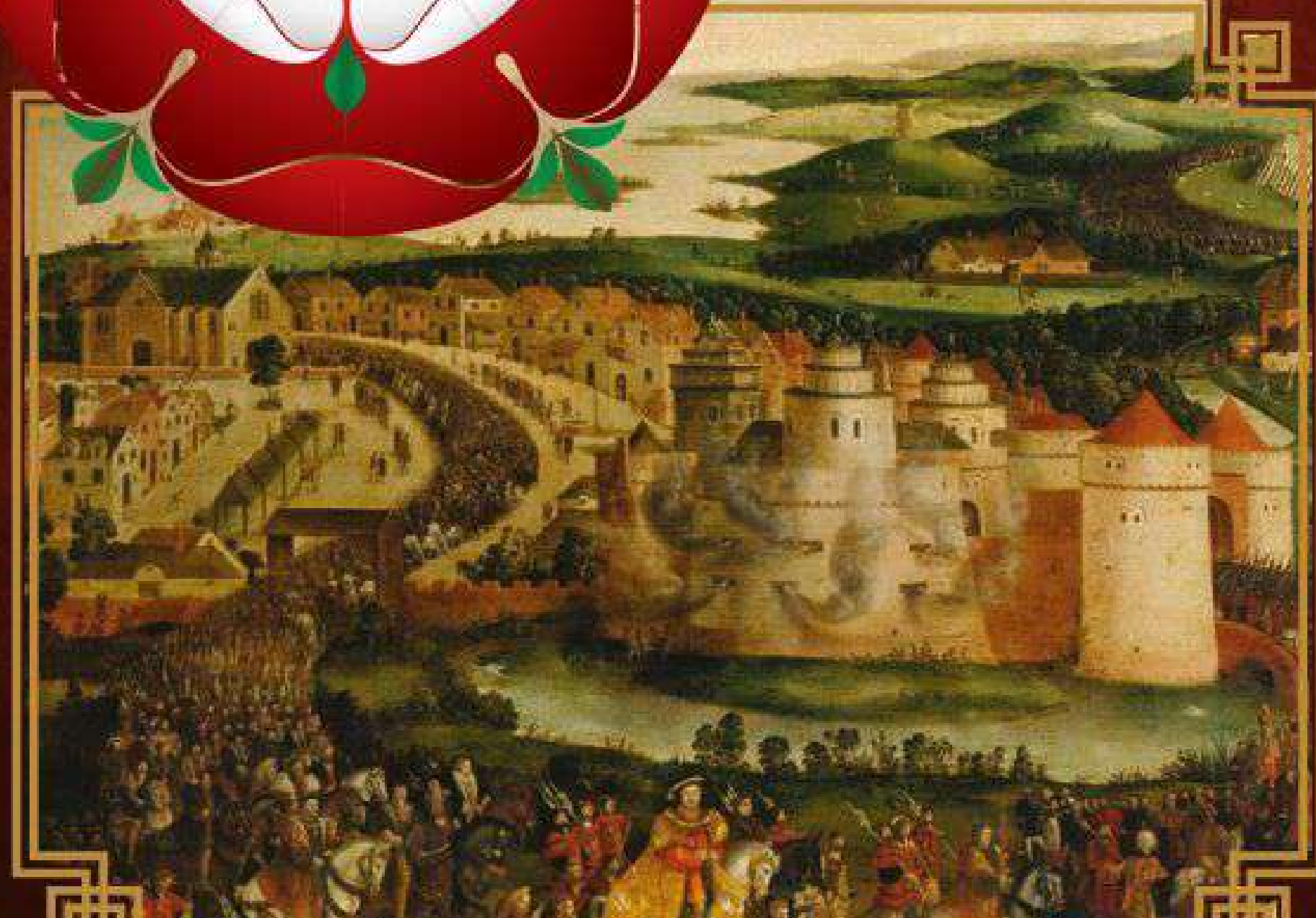
HENRY VIII

Inside the royal court of the unexpected Tudor king

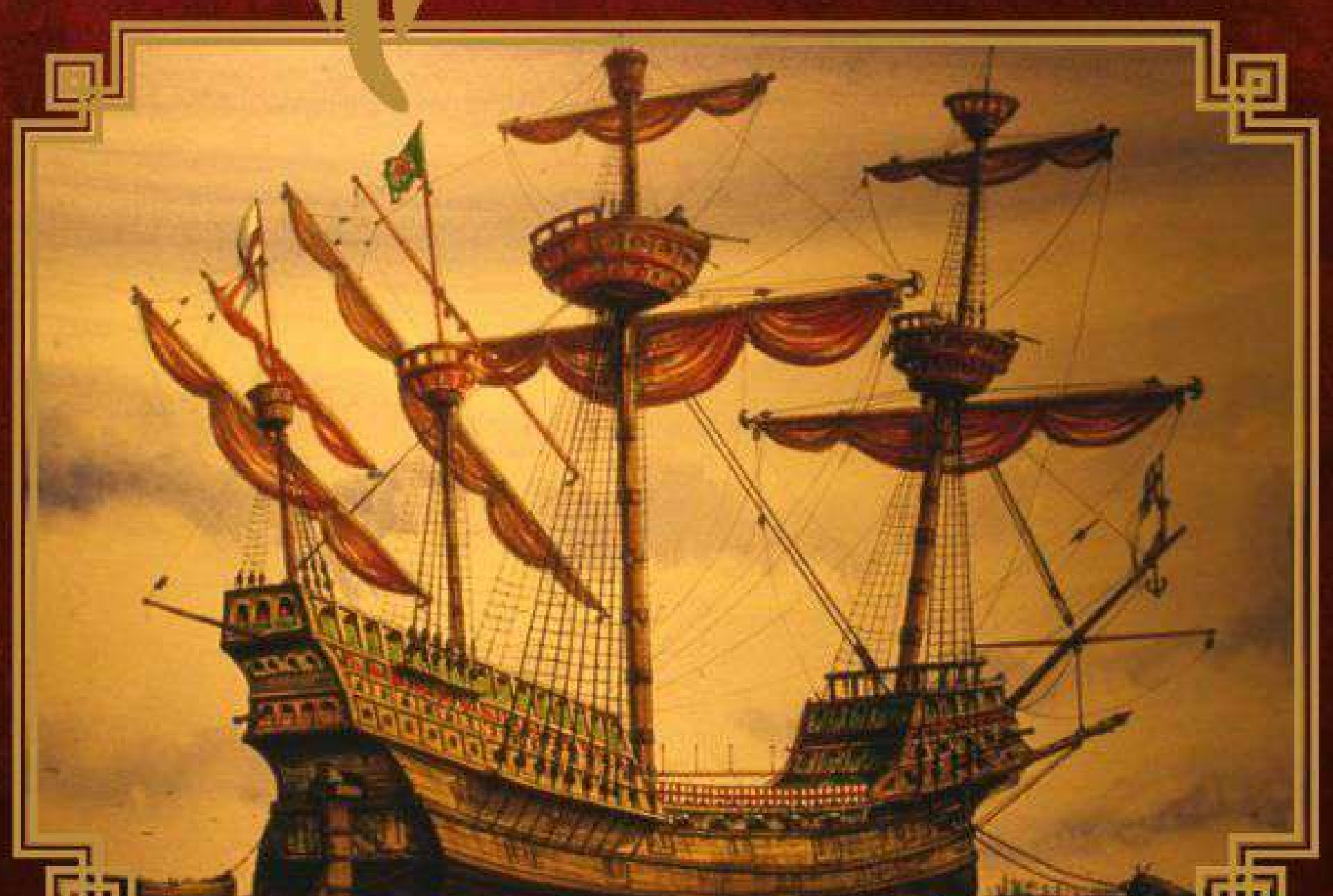


The heir & his spares
Uncover the rivalry that divided Henry's children

THE WIVES & MISTRESSES



DEFENDER OF THE FAITH



SECRETS OF THE MARY ROSE

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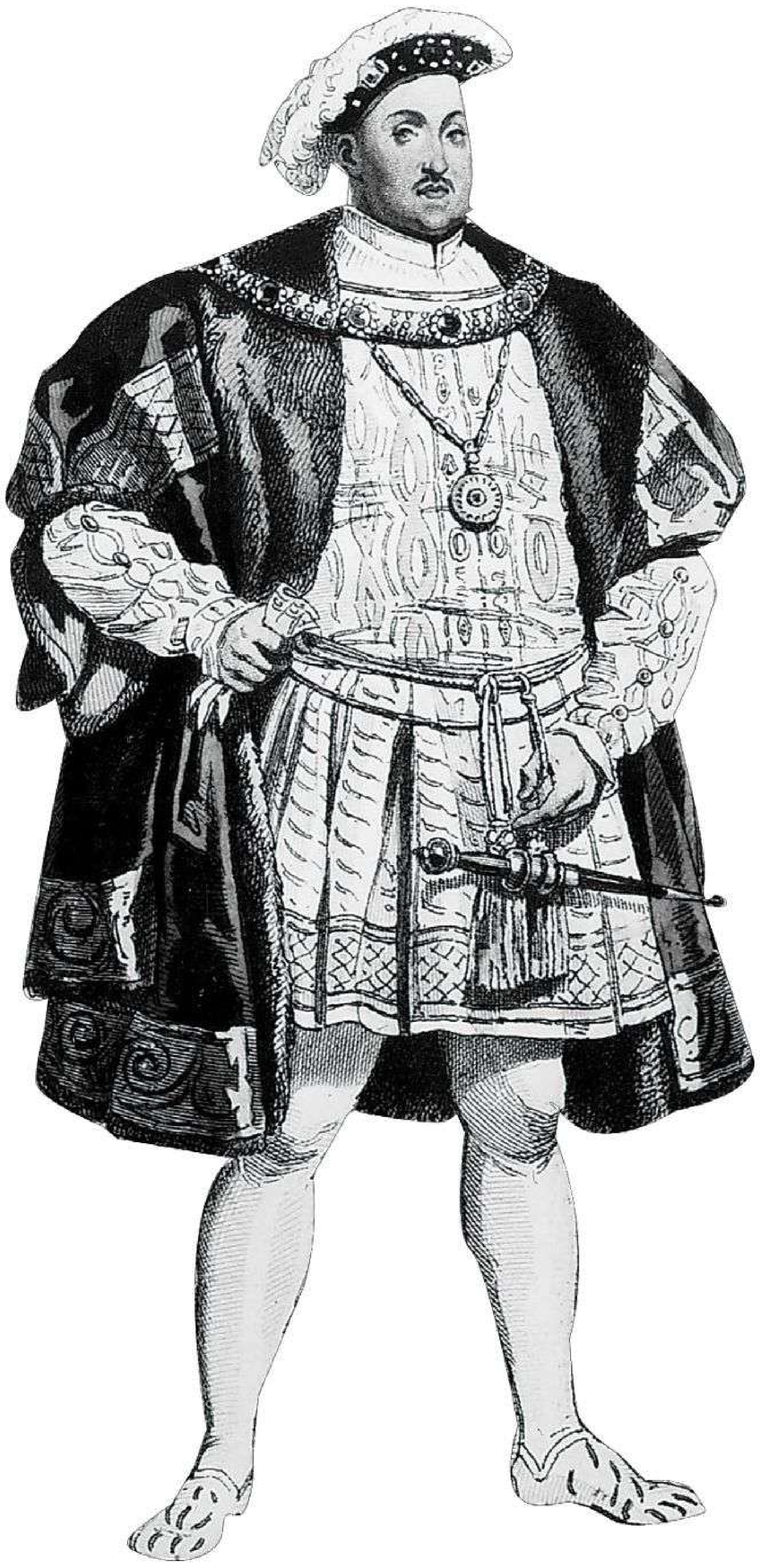
Welcome to

HENRY VIII

The second-born son of an upstart monarch, Henry VIII was never meant to be king. So how exactly did this prince in the shadows rise up to become the most notorious sovereign of England?

Over the following pages, delve into the dramatic story of King Henry's rule, and uncover the consequences of ruling with his heart, not his head. From the infamous six wives and the feuds of Henry's disinherited daughters to the king's war-mongering ways and the birth of the Henrician Reformation, discover how Henry VIII's impulses almost left his nation in tatters.



FUTURE

HENRY VIII

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Building the Tudor Camelot

After the bloodletting of the Wars of the Roses, Henry Tudor knew more than most the fate that awaits upstarts. But what he might have lacked in legitimacy, he would find in legend

Words JON WRIGHT

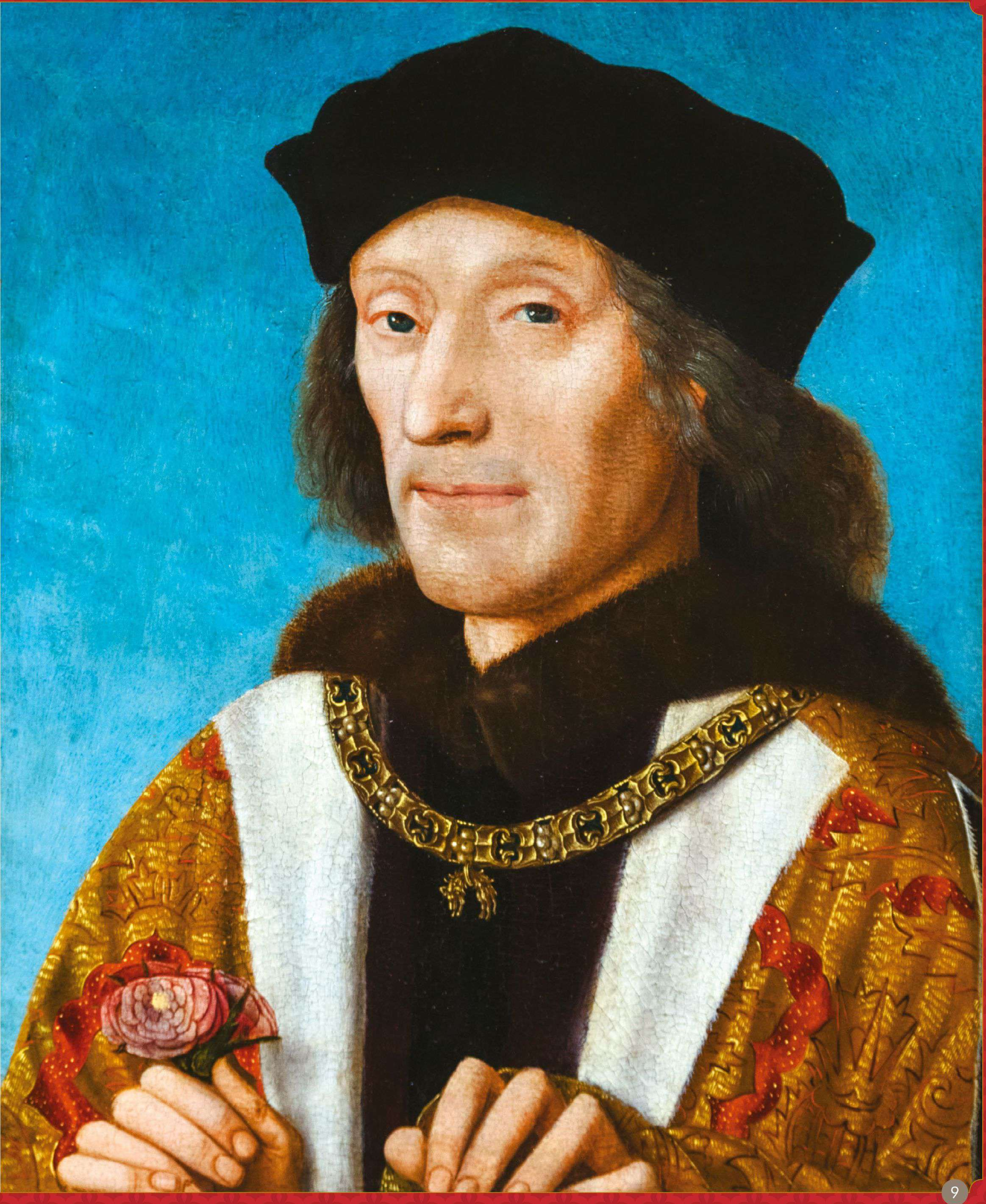
In 1578, the clergyman Nathaniel Baxter was unable to contain his disappointment with England's shameless literary habits: "We see some men bestow their time in writing, some in printing, and more men in reading of vile and blasphemous, or at least of profane and frivolous books, such as that infamous legend of King Arthur." The English, Baxter grumbled, were still addicted to tales of, "Lancelot du Lac, Tristram de Lyones, Gareth of Orkney, Merlin" and all the rest, but it was surely time to turn against "the horrible acts of those whore-masters."

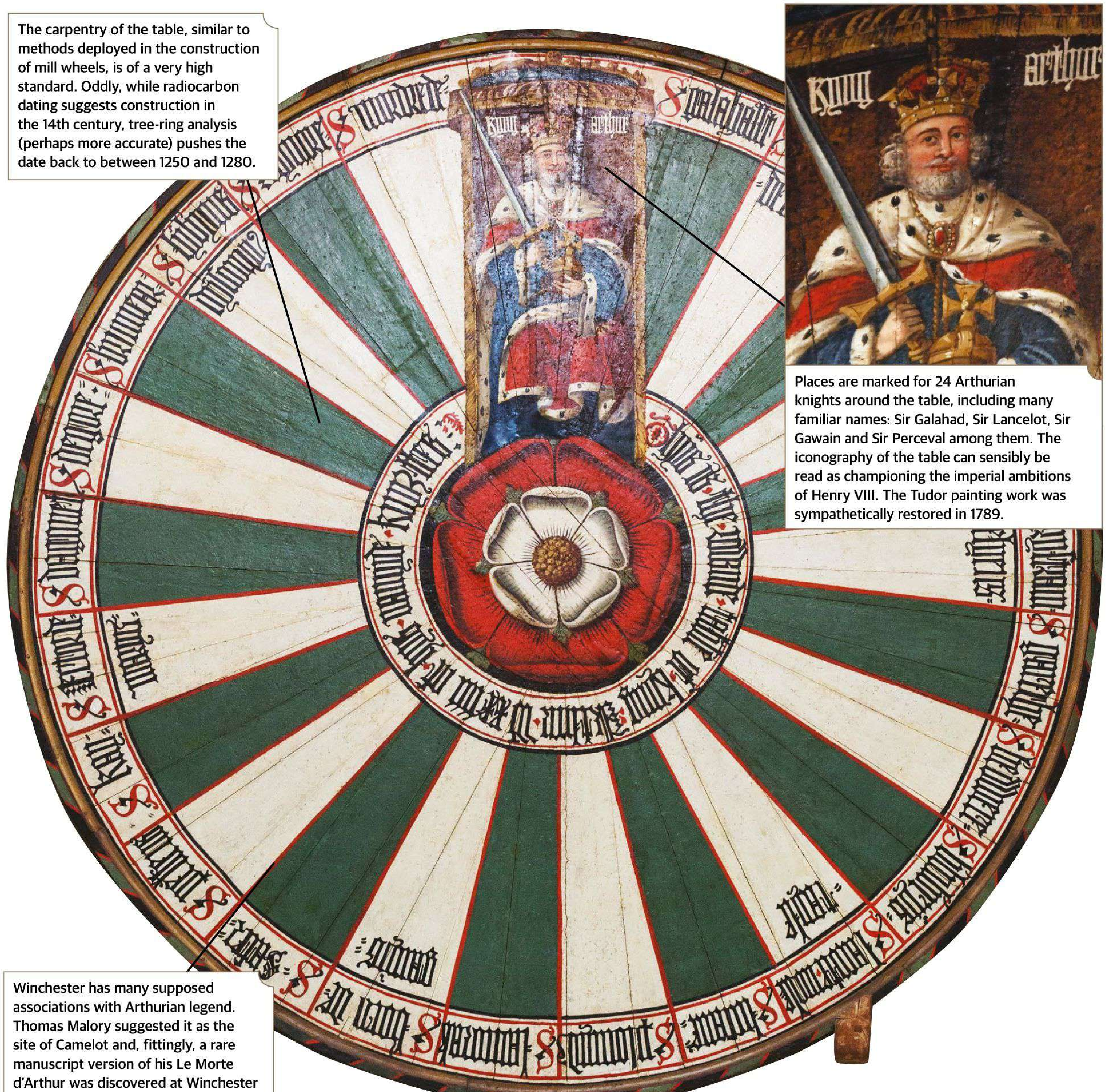
These sententious sentiments found a receptive audience in the more puritanical corners of Elizabethan England, but they would have caused great puzzlement a century earlier. At the dawn of the Tudor age, King Arthur's literary and cultural stock could scarcely have been higher and, as we shall see, this had intriguing consequences for the deeds and musings of Henry VII and his sons. In particular, the year of 1485 proved to be a very good one for King Arthur, and the printing revolution and a dynastic convulsion were largely responsible for this.

By 1485, William Caxton had already made quite the splash in the fledgling world of printed books, but according to some of his critics, there was still much work to be done. "After that I had accomplished and finished divers histories," Caxton recalled, "many noble and divers gentlemen of this realm of England came and demanded me many and oft times wherefore that I have not made and imprinted the noble history... of the best Christian and worthy King Arthur."

The past, Caxton explained, was crowded with mighty rulers and conquerors - from Hector of Troy to Charlemagne, and King David to Alexander the Great - but King Arthur far outstripped all of these historical heroes, and "ought most to be remembered among us Englishmen before all other Christian kings."

Caxton heeded the entreaties and soon the first printed edition of Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* emerged from his Westminster printing press in the summer of 1485. In his preface, Caxton, always a skilled publicist, boasted of what Malory's epic had to offer. It allowed the reader to "see and learn the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and virtuous deeds that some knights used in those days" as well as "how they that were vicious were punished and oft put to shame and rebuke." Readers were invited by the author to "take the good and honest acts in their remembrance" and to relish an enticing blend of "hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue and sin."





The carpentry of the table, similar to methods deployed in the construction of mill wheels, is of a very high standard. Oddly, while radiocarbon dating suggests construction in the 14th century, tree-ring analysis (perhaps more accurate) pushes the date back to between 1250 and 1280.

Places are marked for 24 Arthurian knights around the table, including many familiar names: Sir Galahad, Sir Lancelot, Sir Gawain and Sir Perceval among them. The iconography of the table can sensibly be read as championing the imperial ambitions of Henry VIII. The Tudor painting work was sympathetically restored in 1789.

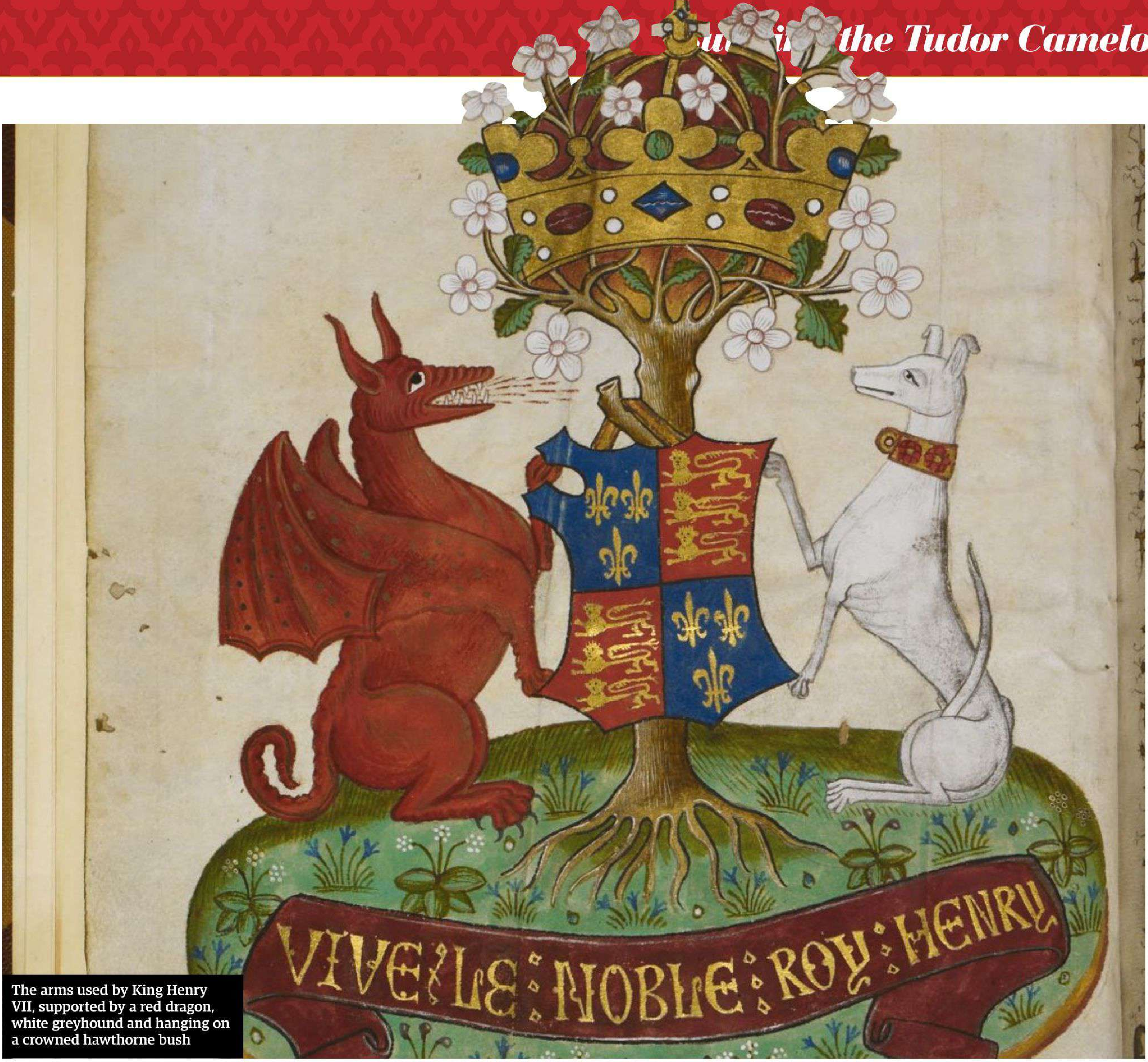
Winchester has many supposed associations with Arthurian legend. Thomas Malory suggested it as the site of Camelot and, fittingly, a rare manuscript version of his Le Morte d'Arthur was discovered at Winchester College in 1934. The city was also the location of Prince Arthur's birth on St Eustace's Day (20 September 1486).

The Winchester Round Table

At the risk of ruining a good story, the famous oak Round Table at Winchester has no direct connection with the ancient kings of 6th-century Britain but it is, nonetheless, a fascinating artefact.

Weighing in at roughly 1,200 kilograms and with a diameter of 5.5 metres, the table still hangs in the Great Hall at Winchester Castle. Modern scholarship suggests that the table was constructed at some point between 1250 and 1350, though opinion concerning the precise date is divided. One popular suggestion is that Edward I commissioned the table for a tournament in 1290 held to celebrate the forthcoming marriage of one of his children.

The table was first mounted in the great hall during the reign of Edward III and was unpainted but with a decorative cover. The early Tudor monarchs lavished considerable care and attention on a relic believed by many to be a genuine Arthurian survival. Henry VIII, who visited the table on several occasions, oversaw a major refurbishment, in 1516 or 1522, which saw the application of green and white paint (the Tudors' livery colours), the famous Tudor rose, and an image of Arthur which, to some, bears a striking resemblance to the second Tudor King.


VIVE LE NOBLE ROY HENRY

The arms used by King Henry VII, supported by a red dragon, white greyhound and hanging on a crowned hawthorne bush

Caxton aimed his book at "all noble princes, lords and ladies, gentlemen or gentlewomen, that desire to read or hear read… the noble and joyous history of the great conqueror and excellent king." One of those "noble princes" would have been especially receptive to a new digest of Arthurian tales. Henry VII secured victory at Bosworth just a few weeks after Caxton's edition of Malory's epic was published and the new king had already exhibited a striking fondness for King Arthur.

Henry made much of the Welsh roots that linked him to Britain's ancient rulers and King Arthur would be claimed as a direct ancestor. Tellingly, one symbol full of associations with this glittering past would become central to Henry's pageantry and propaganda. Red dragons would soon be seen on the flags at Bosworth, at Henry's triumphant entry into London and at his lavish coronation.

This was just the start of a concerted campaign to exploit Arthurian themes. Early in the reign, teams of clerics were dispatched to Wales to tease out connections between Tudors and ancient British rulers, and Henry was sure to include an image of Arthur in the portrayal of illustrious monarchs at his new palace in Richmond. His subjects sensed the prevailing mood and when Henry visited Worcester in 1486, the local burghers knew precisely how to flatter the new monarch. In a dramatic entertainment, one of the characters had this to say to the assembled crowds:

"Cadwaladr's blood lineally descending,
Long hath been told of such a prince coming,
Wherefore friends, if that I shall not lie,
This same is the fulfiller of the prophecy."

Cadwaladr was the last of the great British rulers – one of the successors of King Arthur – with a pedigree stretching all the way back to Brutus, the legendary Trojan exile credited by many Medieval writers as the founding father of the Britons.

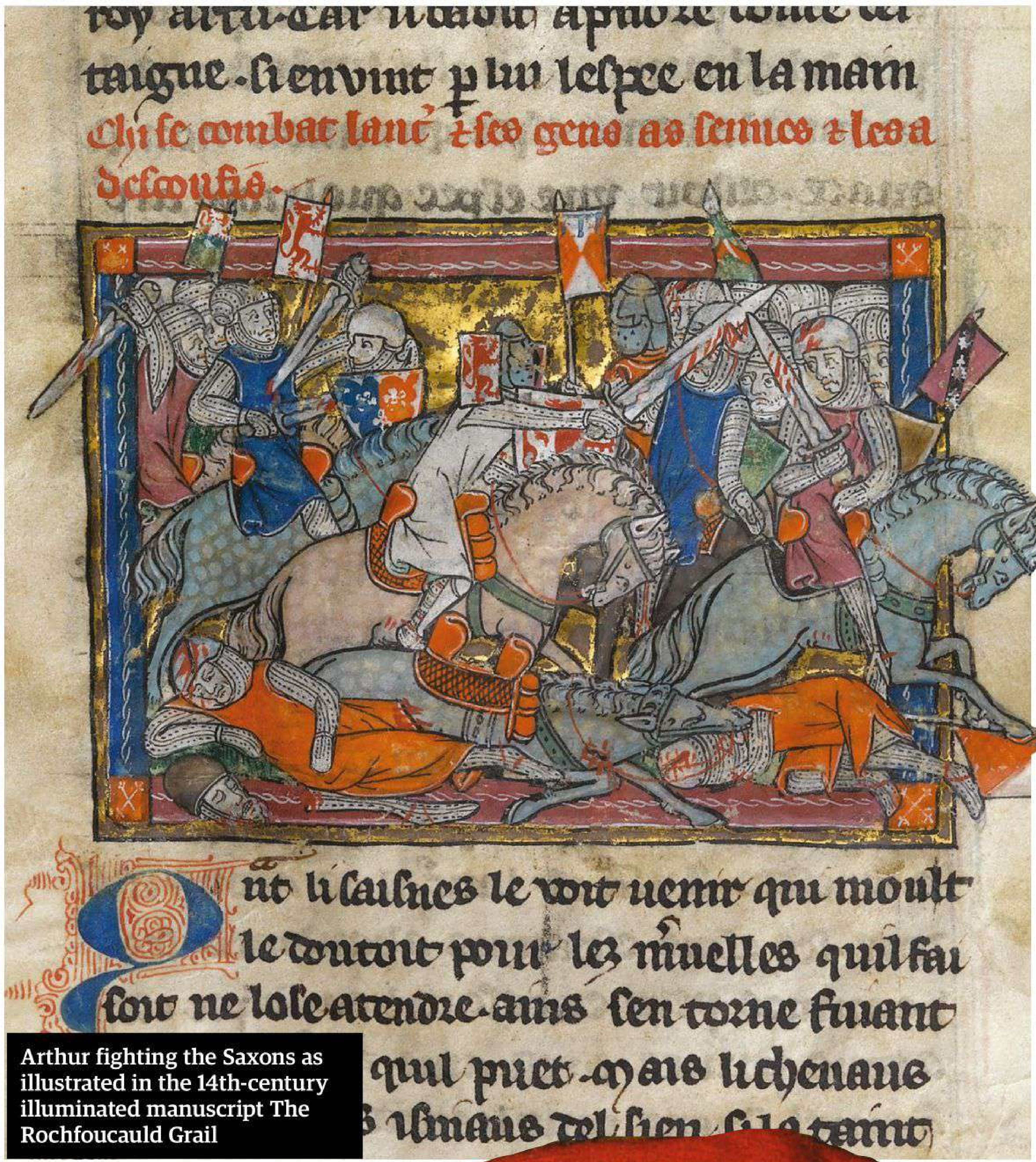
This entire tradition – with King Arthur at its core – was now being pressed into service in order to help legitimise the fledgling, and rather fragile, Tudor regime. The greatest propaganda opportunity of all arrived when Henry was granted a son in September 1486. The Augustinian friar Bernard André suggested naming the child Arthur had at least something to do with astronomical happenstance. The star Arcturus was ascendant in the night sky at the time. Making reference to a heroic ancient king was also patently part of Henry's strategy, however, and it is surely significant that steps were taken to ensure his son's birth and baptism at Winchester, a town long associated with the story of King Arthur and his knights – indeed, the very site of Camelot according to Malory.

Such dialogue with the past would play a leading role in the formation of Henry's sons and it is important to stress just how powerful the attendant symbolism was to contemporaries. In that preface to Malory's book, Caxton explained that, "divers men hold opinion that there was no such Arthur and that all such books as have been made of him [are] but feigned and fables." He even admitted to having harboured his own doubts, but these had easily been vanquished by a wealth of evidence. Just look, he wrote, at all the chronicles that recorded Arthur's deeds, or the red wax seal at the shrine of Edward the Confessor's tomb at Westminster, which bore Arthur's name. Gawain's skull could be found at Dover Castle, the famous Round Table was hanging in Winchester and surely everyone knew that the bodies of Arthur and Guinevere had been unearthed at Glastonbury in the late 12th century. We may find such 'proof' risible, but it counted for a great deal in early Tudor England. There were naysayers, to be sure, but most contemporaries accepted the historicity of King Arthur. As a result, Arthur's potency as a bulwark of the new Tudor regime was greatly enhanced.

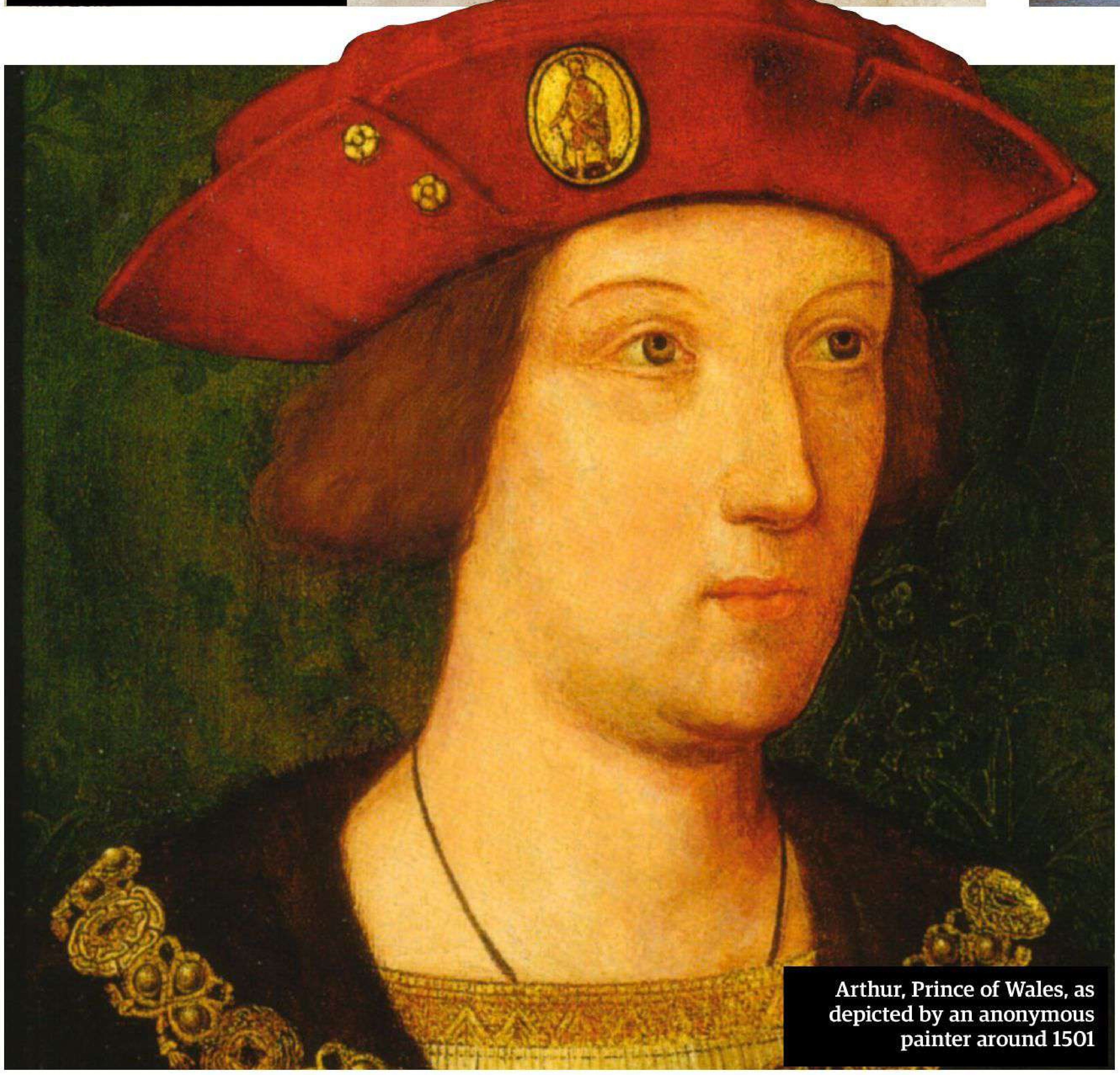
Moreover, the deeds of Arthur and his knights had long since become part of England's cultural groundwater. Building on the long tradition of Welsh chronicles, Geoffrey of Monmouth had transformed England's appreciation of Arthur during the 12th century. Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* did not possess all the aspects of later Arthurian literature, but the text secured Arthur's place in the English historical consciousness. Not that everyone was delighted by this development. William of Newburgh attacked Monmouth for having, "clothed in the respectable name of history, fables about Arthur taken from ancient fictions," but such voices of dissent were easily drowned out and, over the coming centuries, new layers of chivalric romance were added to the Arthurian legend. Malory's telling of the tale, in many ways a composite text derived from earlier iterations of the legends, was the culmination of this tradition. It encapsulated an image of Arthur that suited the Tudors perfectly.

Arthur had come to symbolise a sense of English independence and imperial ambition. He was the man who had fought the invading Saxons, embarked on a dazzling round of conquests (in Scotland, Ireland, Gaul, Iceland, Denmark and beyond), and who had even taken on the mighty Roman Empire. This was quite an ally for the new regime to recruit and, when you were naming a son and heir, the ideal port of call.

Not that Henry VII was the first English king to appreciate Arthur's glamour and prestige. Edward I had appealed to the example of Arthur in order to justify his intrusions of Scotland and

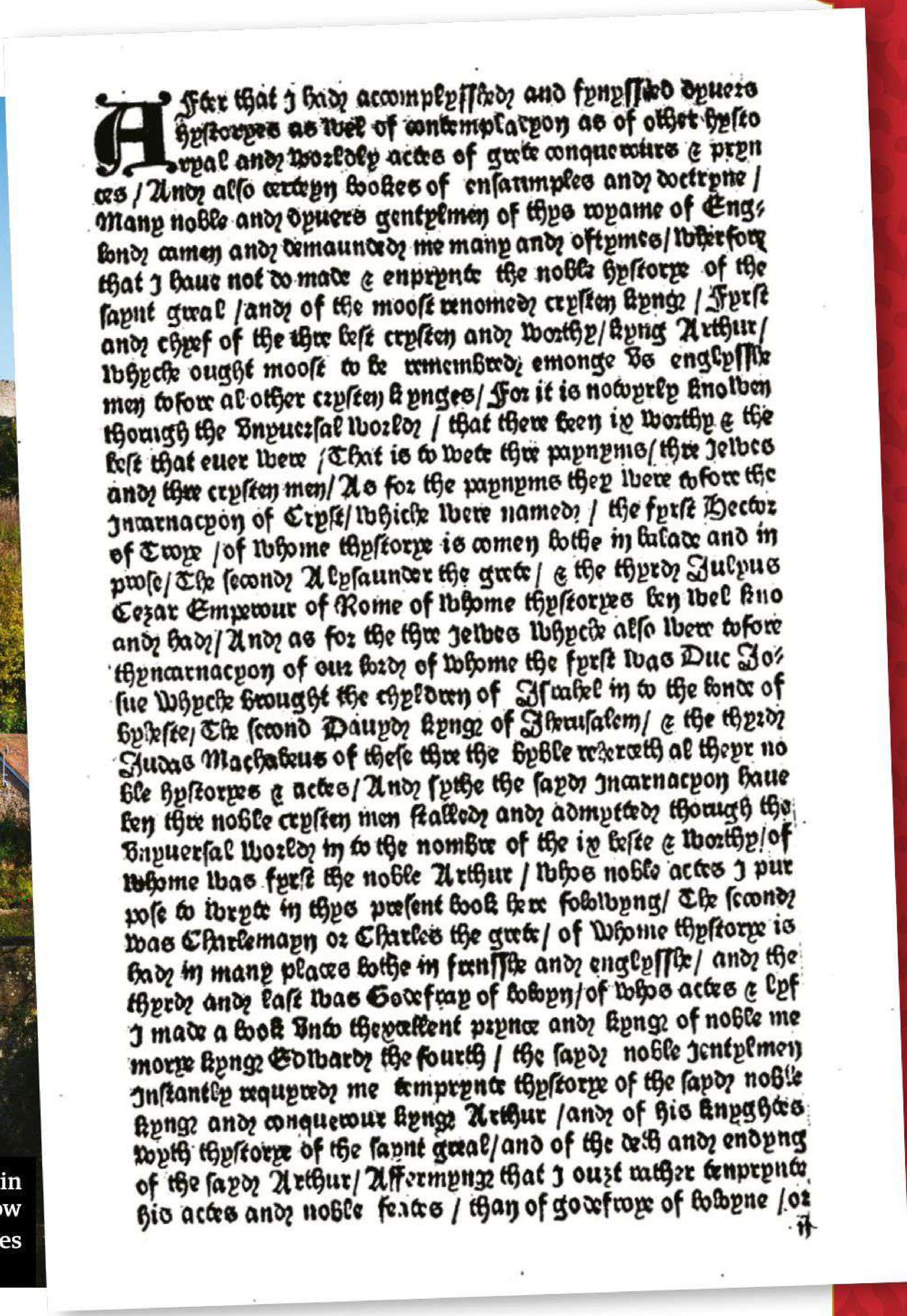

taigue . si enuint p lui lespee en la main
Chi se combat lanc' & ses gens as saisnes & les a
desconfis.
ut li saisnes le voit venir qui moult
le doutoit pour les nouelles quil fai
soit ne lose atendre . ains sen torne fuiant
qui puet . mais li cheuaus

Arthur fighting the Saxons as illustrated in the 14th-century illuminated manuscript The Rochfoucauld Grail



Arthur, Prince of Wales, as depicted by an anonymous painter around 1501

Prince Arthur was educated in his own household at Ludlow Castle in the Welsh Marches



After that I had accomplysshed and fynysshed dyuers hystoryes as wel of contemplacyon as of other hystoryal and worldly actes of grete conquerours & prynces / And also certeyn bookes of ensaumples and doctryne / Many noble and dyuers gentylmen of thys royame of Englond camen and demaunded me many and oftymes / wherfore that I haue not do made & enprynte the noble hystorye of the saynt greal / and of the moost renomed crysten kyng / Fyrst and chyef of the thre best crysten and worthy / kyng Arthur / whyche ought moost to be remembred emonge vs englysshe men tofore al other crysten kynges / For it is notoyrly knowen thorugh the vnyuersal world / that there been ix worthy & the best that euer were / That is to wete thre paynyms / thre Jewes and thre crysten men / As for the paynyms they were tofore the Incarnacyon of Cryst / whiche were named / the fyrst Hector of Troye / of whome thystorye is comen bothe in balade and in prose / The second Alysaunder the grete / & the thyrd Julyus Cezar Emperour of Rome of whome thystoryes ben wel kno and had / And as for the thre Jewes whyche also were tofore thyncarnacyon of our lord of whome the fyrst was Duc Josue whyche brought the chyldren of Israhel in to the londe of byheste / The second Dauyd kyng of Jherusalem / & the thyrd Judas Machabeus of these thre the byble reherceth al theyr noble hystoryes & actes / And sythe the sayd Incarnacyon haue ben thre noble crysten men stalled and admytted thorugh the vnyuersal world in to the nombre of the ix beste & worthy / of whome was fyrst the noble Arthur / whos noble actes I purpose to wryte in thys present book here folowyng / The second was Charlemayn or Charles the grete / of whome thystorye is had in many places bothe in frensshe and englysshe / and the thyrd and last was Godefray of boloyn / of whos actes & lyf I made a book vnto thexcellent prynce and kyng of noble memorye kyng Edward the fourth / the sayd noble Jentylmen instantly requyred me temprynte thystorye of the sayd noble kyng and conquerour kyng Arthur / and of his knyghtes wyth thystorye of the saynt greal / and of the deth and endyng of the sayd Arthur / Affermyng that I ouȝt rather tenprynte his actes and noble feates / than of godefroye of boloyne / or

Wales, and had made a point of visiting his and Guinevere's supposed remains at Glastonbury when they were re-interred in 1278. It was most likely under Edward I that the famous Round Table at Winchester was built, perhaps as part of a tournament that accompanied betrothal celebrations. A little later, Edward III appears to have regarded himself as a bit of a 'second Arthur' and when he established the Order of the Garter in the mid-14th century, he positioned it as a continuation of Arthurian chivalric tradition. The symbolism was always hard to resist, which is one reason why Richard I, as he rode out of Vézelay in 1190 at the outset of a crusade, flourished a sword called Excalibur. This was the legacy inherited with gusto by Henry VII. He once told an ambassador that the Order of the Garter had been founded by King Arthur, he appears to have owned several Arthurian texts and it seems reasonable to assume that he would have applauded Caxton's primary reason for spreading word of Arthur's tale, "that noble men may see and learn the noble arts of chivalry."

How far, though, was there a conscious attempt to instil Arthurian ideals in Henry's sons? Later library inventories suggest that books concerning King Arthur were around and it would have been impossible for the princes to miss the wealth of references to the Arthurian past in courtly pageantry and festivities. When it comes to the formal education of Arthur and Henry, however, the evidential trail is less easy to negotiate. The great humanist Desiderius Erasmus once lamented the failure of many monarchs to take their children's education seriously: "Some princes," he wrote, "exercise themselves greatly over the proper care of a beautiful horse, yet consider it a matter of no importance to whom they entrust the training of their son." Henry VII most certainly did not belong in this parlous category. Indeed, he continued a trend within English royal circles to move the instruction of children away from noble overseers, whose methods had often been less than reliable, towards professional educators.

By the age of six, Arthur was settled in his own household at Ludlow Castle where a string of talented teachers were available. John Rede, former headmaster at Winchester School, provided an excellent grounding in Latin and, from ten Arthur was largely under the tutelage of Bernard André. Erasmus was not a great admirer of the Frenchman, describing him as "a blind flatterer," and at times his obsession with dominating Arthur's education was counterproductive. He appears, for instance, to have gone out of his way to prevent eminent scholar Thomas Linacre from taking up a role in the prince's formation. Nonetheless, André appears to have acquitted himself well and while it is always difficult to distinguish between sycophantic praise of a royal's intellectual capacities and actual attainment, there is strong evidence of Arthur making impressive progress.

By age ten, André was describing him as "a very noble and literate person" and three years later he was able to write Latin love letters, redolent of Ovid, to Catherine of Aragon. We also know that, by the time of his premature death, Arthur had covered, among much else, the poetry of Vergil and Ovid, the plays of Plautus and Terence, the histories of Thucydides, Livy and Suetonius, and the oratorical works of Cicero and Quintilian.

Such an approach was decidedly modish: a solidly classical education with only occasional forays into authors beyond the confines of ancient Greece and Rome (St Augustine and the church historian Eusebius, for instance). There

> “That said, Arthur was not especially drawn to the arts of chivalry”

was little formal space for chivalric romances or Arthurian chronicles in such a curriculum and it is possible that someone like André would have frowned upon such diversions. He was one of several poets who wrote celebratory verses at Arthur’s birth and he conspicuously avoided any significant references to the glaringly obvious parallels between Arthur and his ancient namesake.

Education exists beyond the schoolroom, however, and there is no reason to suppose that Arthur was prevented from reading or hearing the ancient tales. That said, Arthur was not especially drawn to the arts of chivalry. We know that he received a very expensive longbow at the age of five and that, back in 1489, he had been able to sit atop a horse without incident during his investment as Prince of Wales, but forays into knightly endeavours appear to have remained at the ceremonial level. For all that, he was hardly able to ignore the links with the ancient Arthur.

As the historian Sean Cunningham has argued, the location of the prince’s establishment in the Welsh Marches was highly significant. As well as learning the ropes of estate management and making some early ventures into governance, Arthur will have been surrounded by people, notably members of the mighty Mortimer family, who went to great lengths to advertise their links to the ancient British rulers, King Arthur included.

If, then, Arthur’s formal education was dominated by what has been described as a “pervasive, if primitive, humanism” other elements of his upbringing dripped with Arthurian resonances. When he travelled to Coventry in 1497, he was met with a pageant in which the image of King Arthur loomed large. When Arthur’s bride-to-be, Catherine of Aragon, first arrived in London, she was addressed by someone dressed as St Ursula, the daughter of an ancient British monarch, and reminded of a lineage from which “came Arthur the wise, noble and valiant king that in this region was first of his name.” Recent historians have rightly queried the notion of an all-pervasive “cult of King Arthur” within the early Tudor monarchy and argued that Arthurian themes declined somewhat in importance after the first years of Henry VII’s reign.

By the time Arthur was marrying Catherine, obvious opportunities to highlight the ancient British links during the ceremonies were largely ignored. King Arthur made appearances, but he was one symbol among many. The talismanic appeal of Arthur had certainly not evaporated, however, and the prince’s awareness of his illustrious forebear must have been keen. His father had certainly made sure of that and it is interesting to speculate on what might have transpired if he had lived, taken the crown and inaugurated a second Arthurian age.

This was not to be, of course, and with Arthur’s death in 1502, all eyes turned to his brother Henry. Again, elements in Henry’s schooling might be perceived as potential barriers to the full embrace of the Arthurian legacy. With firm emphasis on the luminaries of classical arts and letters, an abiding goal was to instil stable concepts of virtue through moral exempla. Scripture also played a key role in this process. Erasmus explained that “nature has equipped children with a unique urge to imitate whatever they hear or see; they do this with great enthusiasm, as though they were monkeys, and are overjoyed if they think they have been successful.” Role models from the ancient past, along with the lessons of scripture, could have an edifying effect on any student, but the process was particularly important when the characters of future rulers were at stake. As Erasmus continued, “the main hope of getting a good ruler hangs on his proper education” and moulding minds was always easiest early on in life: “There is no better time to shape and improve a prince than when he does not yet realise himself a prince.”

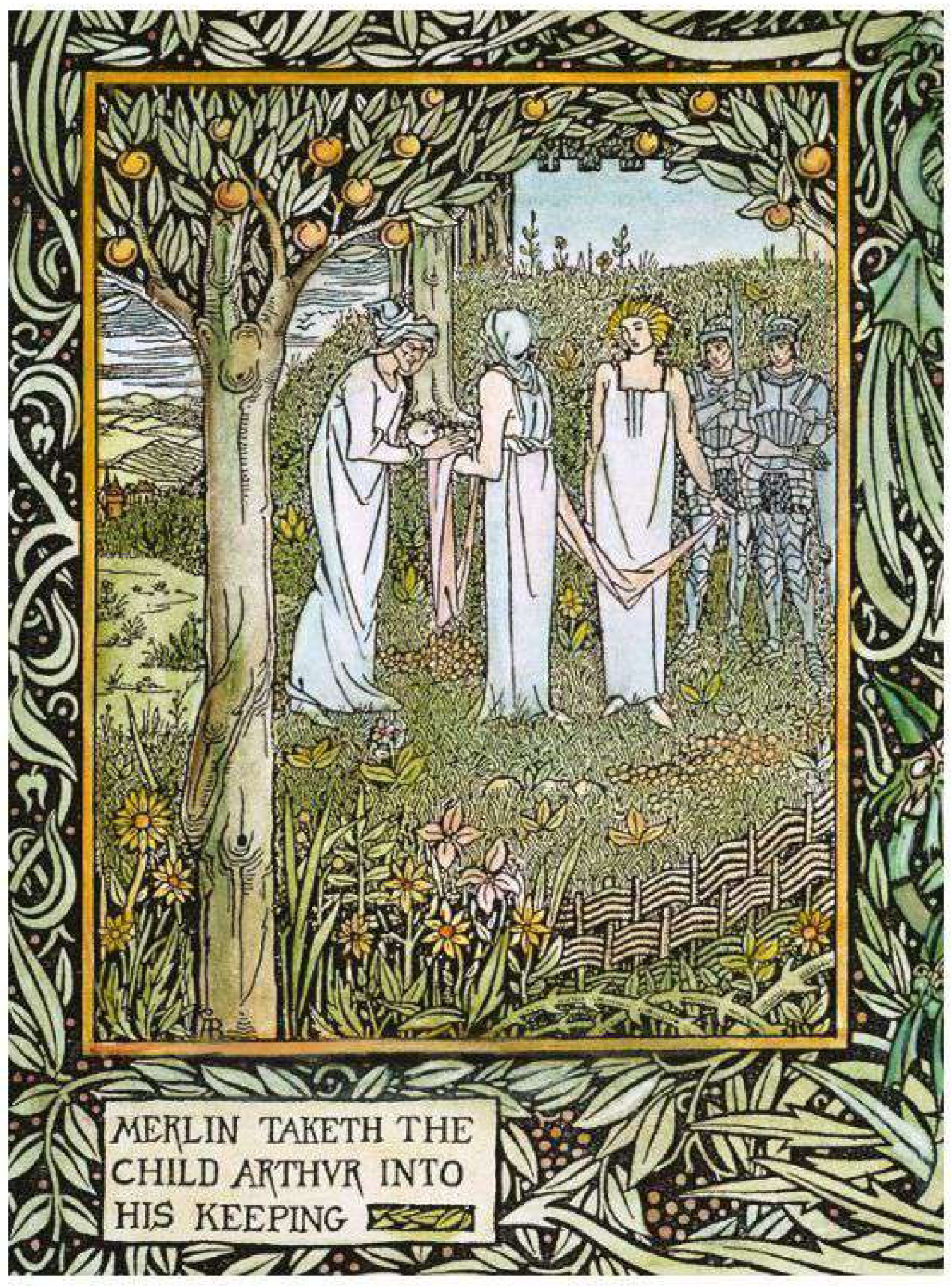
An idealised version of a ruler was the goal: one who was immune to flattery, who gladly patronised the arts, and stayed far away from the “whole crowd of wantons, hard drinkers [and] filthy tongued fellows.” Any potential for lapsing into tyranny was to be expunged. This is precisely the kind of education that Prince Henry received and, especially after Arthur’s death, humanist-minded scholars crowded around him with inflated hopes of the future king they might help to produce. Personnel

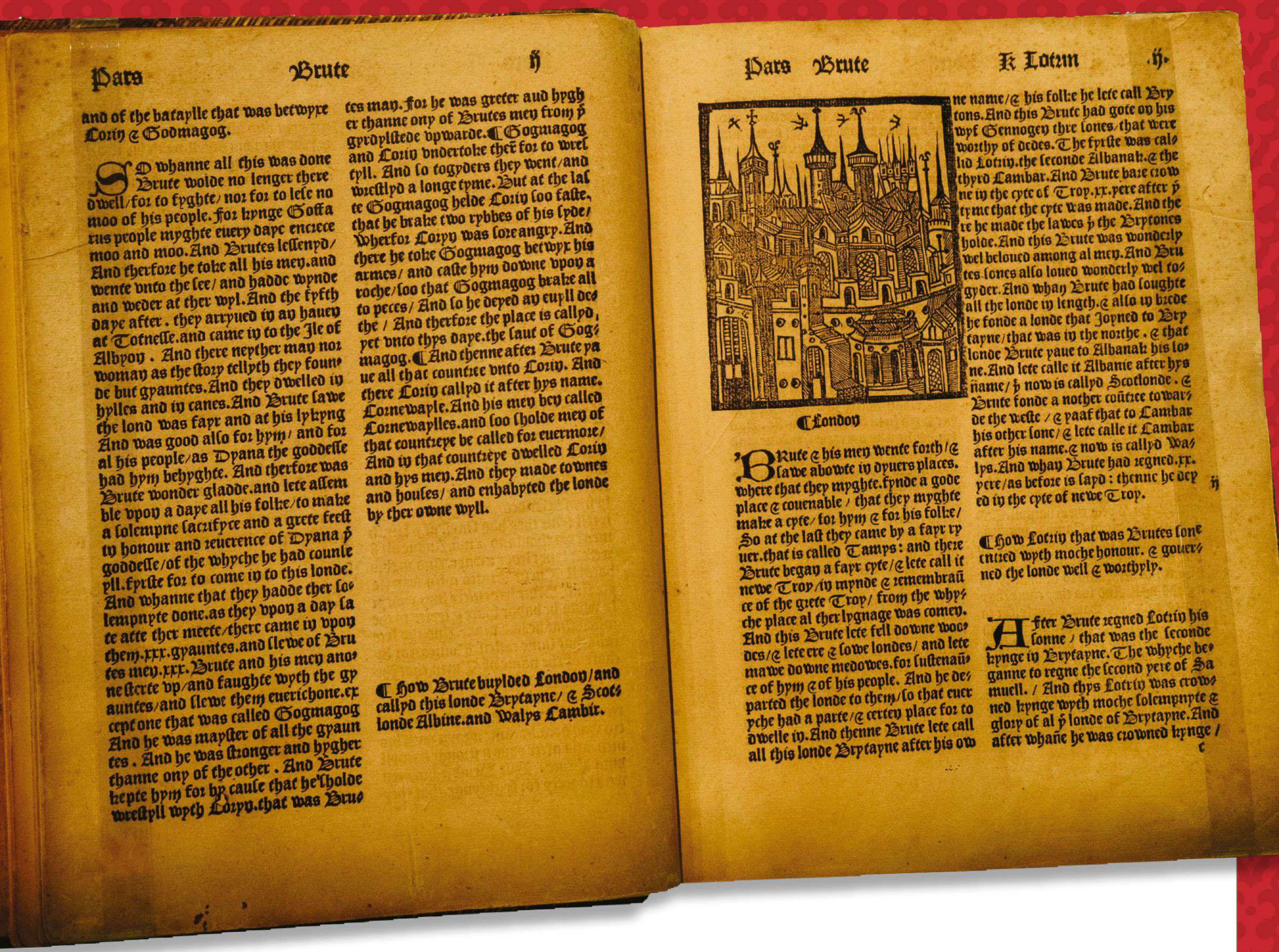
Who was Thomas Malory?

Malory, the son of a notable Warwickshire family, lived a decidedly un-Arthurian life. Everything began respectably enough (military service during the 1440s in France, a period as an MP) but beginning in the mid-century, Malory embarked on a staggeringly wide-ranging criminal career. Allegations against him included, but were not limited to, cattle rustling, extortion, rape, theft from an abbey and planning to ambush and murder the Duke of Buckingham.

In the chaotic political world of the 1450s, Malory spent years moving between prisons, enjoying periods on bail and launching escape attempts with varying degrees of success. He never actually stood trial for any of his supposed crimes and, with the Yorkists’ rise to power in the early 1460s, a reversal of fortunes seemed likely. Malory served with Edward IV during the sieges of Lancastrian-held northern castles in 1462 but, increasingly disenchanted with the regime, he was involved in plots against Edward in 1468 and returned to prison life. Fortunately, a well-stocked library was available and Malory set to work on his great Arthurian epic, completing it in March 1470. The title of the *Morte D’Arthur* (strictly speaking the *Morte Darthur*, sans apostrophe and with lower case ‘a’) was provided by Caxton in his 1485 printed version: Malory knew the work as, in modernised text, *The Whole Book of King Arthur and His Noble Knights of the Round Table*.

In any event, the volume, while largely derived from French prose romances, would exert extraordinary influence over understandings of Arthurian legend. In it, chivalric themes come to the fore, Lancelot’s part expands considerably and familiar episodes such as the grail quest take centre stage. Notably, Arthur returns triumphantly to Britain after bloodying the nose of the Roman Empire rather than ending this adventure in disaster. For the Tudors, Malory’s version of events became close to definitive and, after a period of relative neglect during the 18th century, the text captured the affections of many leading Victorian writers, not least Tennyson.


MERLIN TAKETH THE CHILD ARTHVR INTO HIS KEEPING



Pars Brute ij

and of the bataylle that was betwyxe Coryn & Godmagog.

SO whanne all this was done Brute wolde no lenger there dwell/for to fyghte/ nor for to leſe no moo of his people. For kynge Goffarus people myghte euery daye encreece moo and moo. And Brutes leſſenyd/ And therfore he toke all his men.and wente vnto the ſee/ and hadde wynde and weder at ther wyl. And the fyfth daye after. they arryued in an hauen at Totneſſe.and came in to the Ile of Albyon. And there neyther man nor woman as the ſtory tellyth they founde but gyauntes. And they dwelled in hylles and in caues. And Brute ſawe the lond was fayr and at his lykyng And was good alſo for hym/ and for al his people/as Dyana the goddeſſe had hym behyghte. And therfore was Brute wonder gladde.and lete aſſemble vpon a daye all his folke/to make a ſolempne ſacrifyce and a grete feeſt in honour and reuerence of Dyana yͤ goddeſſe/of the whyche he had counſeyll.fyrſte for to come in to this londe. And whanne that they hadde ther ſolempnyte done.as they vpon a day ſate atte ther meete/there came in vpon them.xxx.gyauntes.and ſlewe of Brutes men.xxx.Brute and his men anone ſterte vp/and faughte wyth the gyauntes/and ſlewe them euerichone.except one that was called Gogmagog And he was mayſter of all the gyauntes. And he was ſtronger and hygher thanne ony of the other. And Brute kepte hym for by cauſe that he ſholde wreſtyll wyth Coryn.that was Brutes man.For he was greter aud hygher thanne ony of Brutes men from yͤ gyrdylſtede vpwarde.¶Gogmagog and Coryn vndertoke there for to wreſtyll. And ſo togyders they went/and wreſtlyd a longe tyme.But at the laſte Gogmagog helde Coryn ſoo faſte, that he brake two rybbes of his ſyde/ Wherfor Coryn was ſore angry.And there he toke Gogmagog betwyx his armes/ and caſte hym downe vpon a roche/ſoo that Gogmagog brake all to peces/ And ſo he deyed an euyll dethe / And therfore the place is callyd, yet vnto thys daye.the ſaut of Gogmagog.¶And thenne after Brute yaue all that countree vnto Coryn. And there Coryn callyd it after hys name. Cornewayle.And his men ben called Cornewaylles.and ſoo ſholde men of that countreye be called for euermore/ And in that countreye dwelled Coryn and hys men.And they made townes and houſes/ and enhabyted the londe by ther owne wyll.

¶How Brute buylded London/and callyd this londe Brytayne/ & Scotlonde Albine.and Walys Cambir.

Pars Brute K Lotrin .ij.

¶London

BRute & his men wente forth/& ſawe abowte in dyuers places. where that they myghte.fynde a gode place & couenable/ that they myghte make a cyte/ for hym & for his folke/ So at the laſt they came by a fayr ryuer.that is called Tamys: and there Brute began a fayr cyte/& lete call it newe Troy/in mynde & remembraunce of the grete Troy/ from the whyche place al ther lygnage was comen. And this Brute lete fell downe woodes/& lete ere & ſowe londes/ and lete mawe downe medowes.for ſuſtenaunce of hym & of his people. And he departed the londe to them/ſo that eueryche had a parte/& certen place for to dwelle in.And thenne Brute lete call all this londe Brytayne after his owne name/& his folke he lete call Brytons.And this Brute had gote on his wyf Gennogen thre ſones/that were worthy of dedes.The fyrſte was callid Lotrin.the ſeconde Albanak.& the thyrd Cambar.And Brute bare crowne in the cyte of Troy.xx.yere after yͤ tyme that the cyte was made.And there he made the lawes yͭ the Brytones holde.And this Brute was wonderly wel beloued among al men.And Brutes ſones alſo loued wonderly wel togyder.And whan Brute had ſoughte all the londe in length.& alſo in brede he fonde a londe that Joyned to Brytayne/that was in the northe. & that londe Brute yaue to Albanak his ſone.And lete calle it Albanie after hys name/ yͭ now is callyd Scotlonde. & Brute fonde a nother coūtree towarde the weſte / & yaaf that to Cambar his other ſone/ & lete calle it Cambar after his name.& now is callyd Walys.And whan Brute had regned.xx. yere/as before is ſayd: thenne he deyed in the cyte of newe Troy. ij

¶How Lotrin that was Brutes ſone entred wyth moche honour. & gouerned the londe well & worthyly.

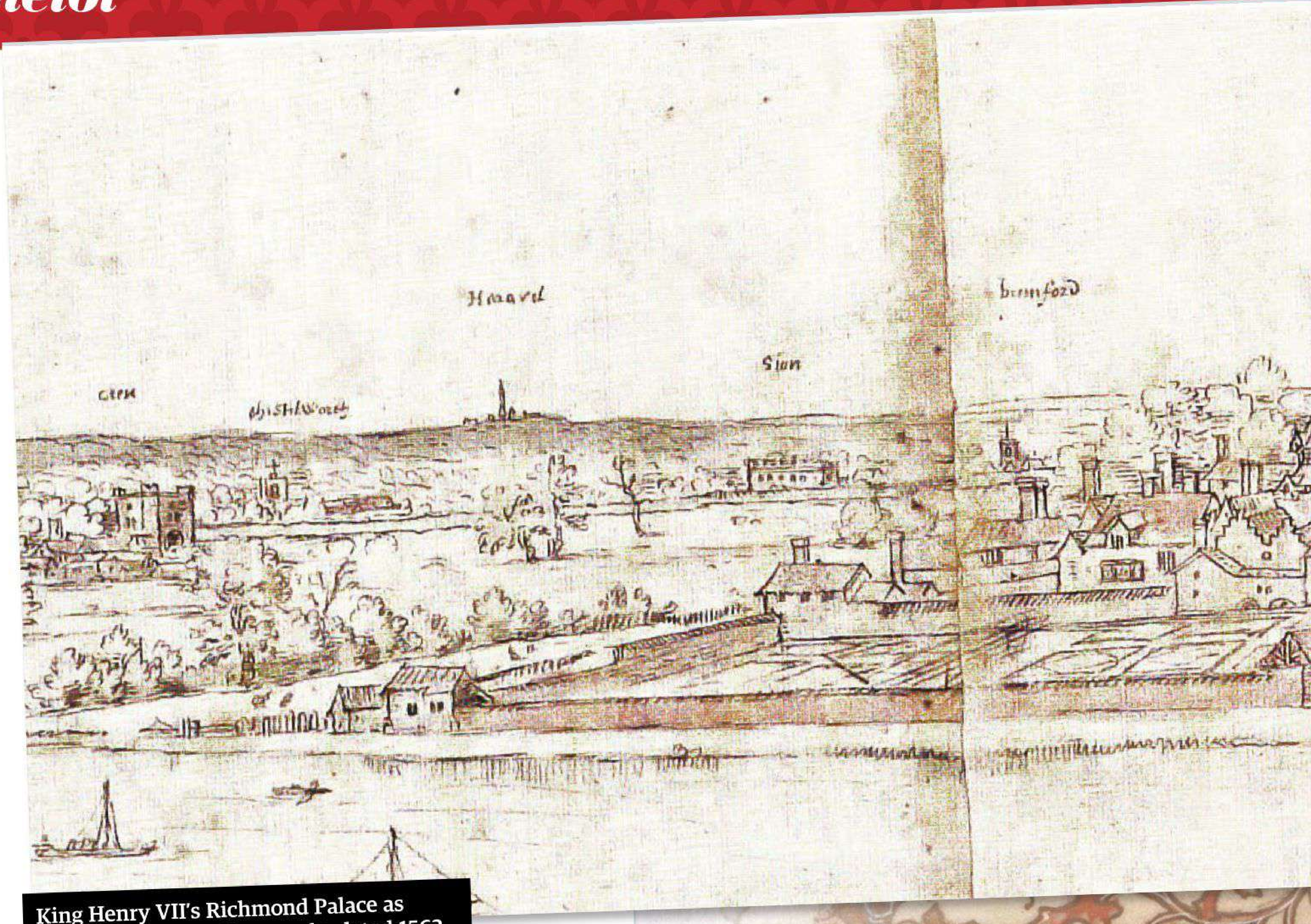
AFter Brute regned Lotrin his ſonne/ that was the ſeconde kynge in Brytayne.The whyche began to regne the ſecond yere of Samuell./ And thys Lotrin was crowned kynge wyth moche ſolempnyte & glory of al yͤ londe of Brytayne.And after whañe he was crowned kynge/

c

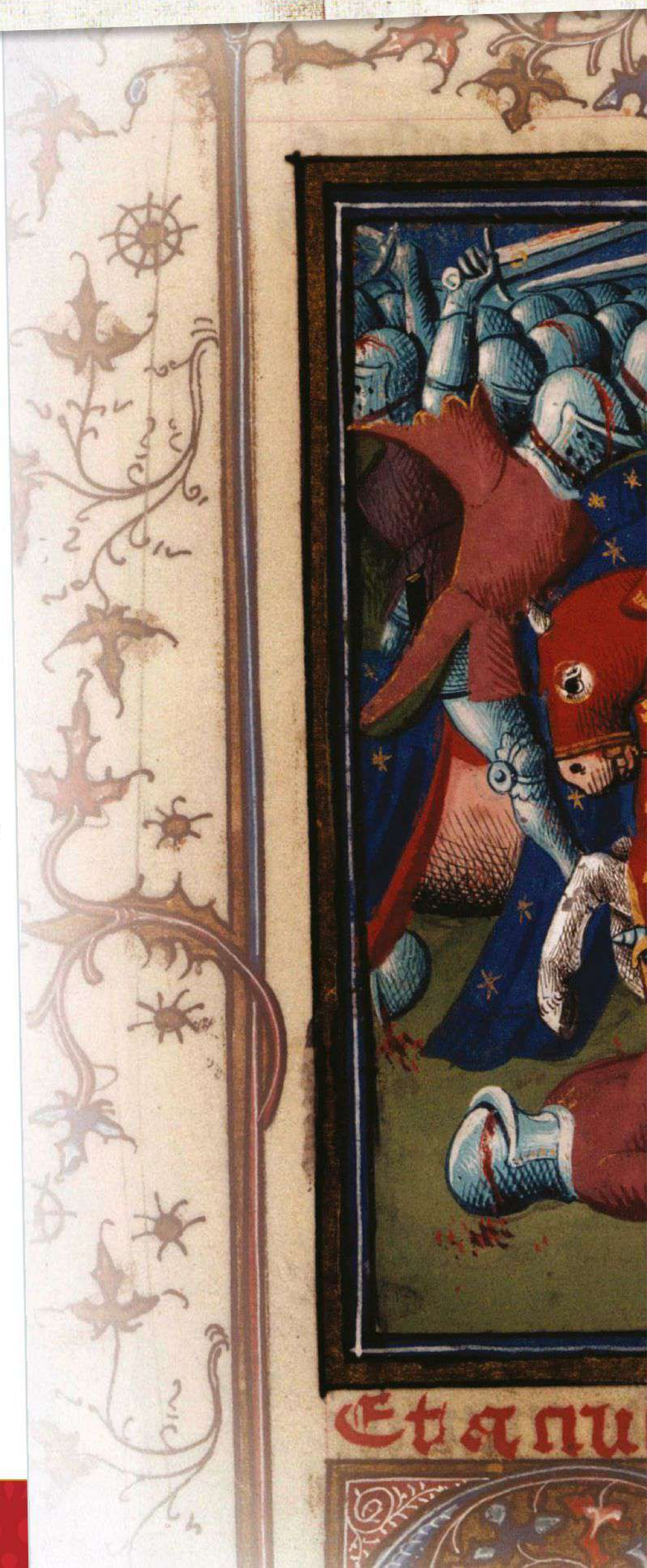
was, after all, crucially important. Erasmus advised the recruitment of the sort of teacher who could "scold without railing, praise without flattering, be revered for his stainless life and loved for his pleasing manner." Such self-styled paragons were influential in Henry's formation. The arrival of John Holt in 1503 was key but, ahead of that, the poet John Skelton impressed Erasmus with his pedagogical impact on the young Henry. The prince, Erasmus rhapsodised, had contemplated, "Athena's arts from earliest childhood with the poet Skelton showing him the sacred fonts." Nor was Skelton bashful about trumpeting his own importance, explaining that he had enabled Henry to "drink out of the sugared well of Helicon's waters crystalline."

The approach to Henry's education was nicely encapsulated in a text produced by Skelton, the *Speculum Principis* of 1501, which deployed key classical and scriptural models to steer Henry away from vices such as gluttony, lechery and anger and to teach him to "know with reason to be munificent, liberal, kind and magnificent." Given the contours of Henry's subsequent tenure on the English throne, there is room to debate how successfully each of these attributes were imparted to the young prince. The effort was made, however, and once more it might appear that, within this humanistic milieu, there would be little room for a romantic figure such as King Arthur. Caution is required here, however. Even Skelton, in the *Speculum*, urged Henry to "peruse the chronicles, direct yourself to histories" and, outside the schoolroom, the prince exhibited tireless enthusiasm for chivalric activities. He became adept at hawking, riding and archery and, according to Bernard André, was apt to "march out and fight daily with his companions in arms at games of war." Jousting became a life-long passion and in this cavalcade of chivalric pastimes, the unexpected visit of Philip of Burgundy, stranded in England during 1506, may well have been crucial. Philip was the very model of an athletic, dashing, martially minded prince and, as well as escorting him to Winchester to see Arthur's supposed Round Table, Henry appears to have yearned to impress and emulate the royal visitor.

Henry undoubtedly gained a great deal from the advocates of the 'new learning' but the dream of producing a model humanist prince was never fully realised. One of the most important planks of Erasmus's ideal education was to cultivate a love of peace and a suspicion of bellicosity. "From war," Erasmus wrote, "comes the shipwreck of all that is good and from it, the sea of all calamities pours out." It was absurd that men fought over so many petty issues: "practically every Angle hates the Gaul and every Gaul the Angle, for no other reason than that he is an Angle" just as "the Italian hates the German; the Swabian, the Swiss." Why, Erasmus asked, "Do these stupid names do more to divide than the common name of Christ does to unite us?" Needless to say, Erasmus and his allies were less than delighted when, shortly after ascending the throne, Henry embarked upon rather pointless wars with some of England's oldest enemies. It is tempting to suggest that an Arthurian sensibility had something to do with all this and we can certainly point to an enduring fascination with the ancient king.



King Henry VII's Richmond Palace as drawn by Antony Wyngaerde, dated 1562



David Starkey wisely defines this as a "significant but by no means obsessive interest," which had a habit of bubbling to the surface at opportune moments. We know that Henry owned Arthurian romances as well as Arthurian-themed art. The antiquary John Leland speculated that his master was, at least in part, motivated by fraternal sentiment: "His elder brother being named Arthur," Henry, "...rather seemed to favour and further the fame of his most renowned ancestor... our ancient Arthur and the knightly train of his Round Table." Stories devoured in childhood may also have been a factor along with the more urgent biddings of strategic necessity. After all, Henry was set on being an intrusive monarch in the realm of foreign affairs and English kings had long been invoking the all-conquering King Arthur to legitimise their exploits. When Henry took on the French, he organised translations of a life of Henry V and of Froissart's chronicles in which the deeds of the Hundred Years' War were so richly described. It is hardly surprising that memories of Arthur, too, would come to the fore when, as Starkey puts it, "the imperial pretensions of the English crown were at stake."

As for Arthur's conflicts with Rome, these too took on heightened resonance during Henry's divorce and feuding with the papacy. When evidence was assembled to demonstrate England's independence in all matters (spiritual as well as secular) the example of Arthur was specifically invoked and, while the Pope rather than an emperor was now the foe, it would perhaps have been cheering to read Caxton's account, in *The Cronycles of England*, of how Arthur had responded to envoys sent from Rome. A bullish letter threatened destruction if the king did not yield to Roman overlordship but the monarch's reply had been blunt: "I am King Arthur of Britain and freely it hold and shall hold."

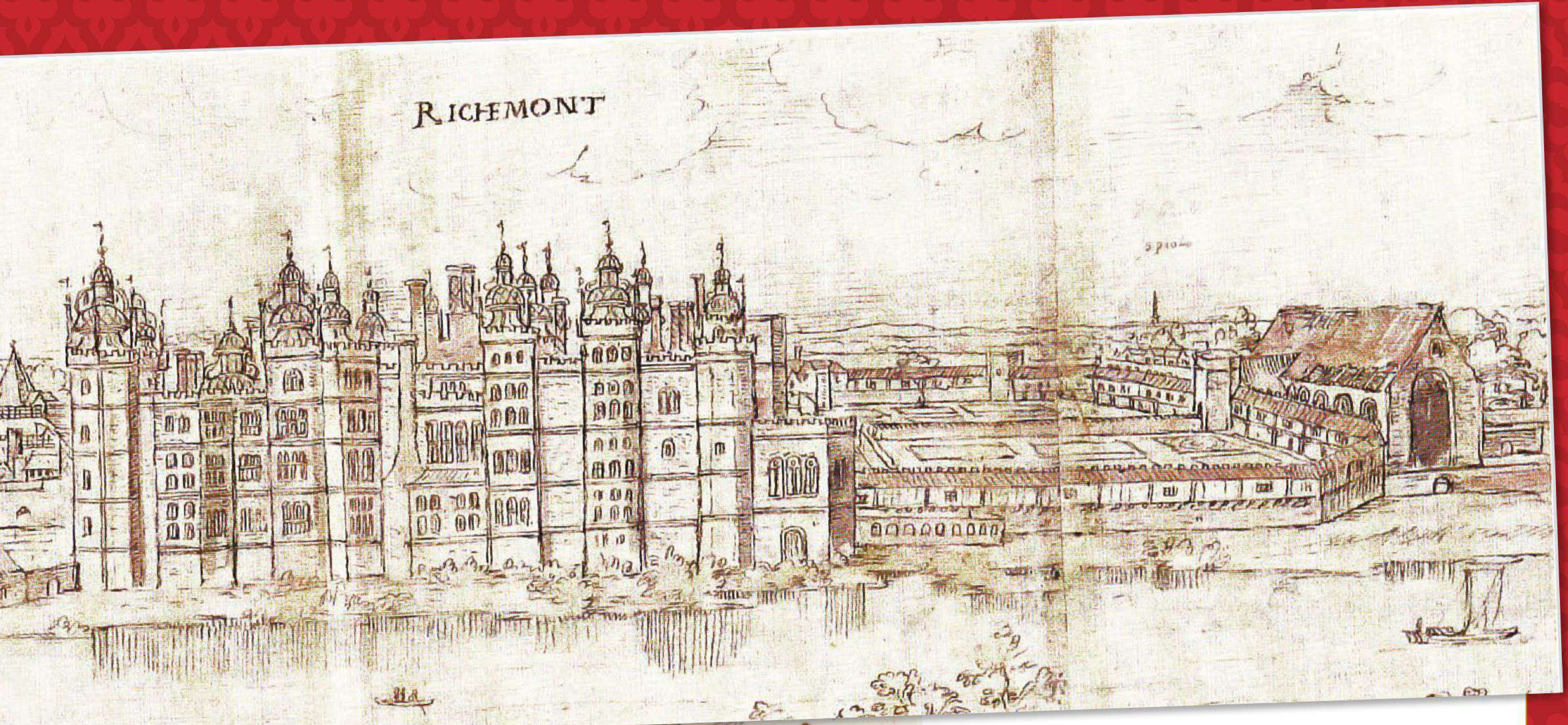
Henry VIII always relished a mighty historical exemplar and, by turns, identified himself with Solomon, Constantine and Henry V. King Arthur was a reliable addition to this symbolic arsenal and Henry's reign witnessed its share of Arthurian moments. Henry would go to great pains to refurbish the Round Table at Winchester, with Arthur sporting a newly added beard and a passing resemblance to the reigning monarch. During the early 1520s, meetings with the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V would be marked by transparent Arthurian iconography. At one meeting in Calais, the two rulers attended a banquet presided over by a statue bearing the inscription "I am the famous King Arthur come to behold you; valorous princes, be welcome." As late as 1539, with Henry's more dynamic days of chivalry behind him, there was still scope for entertainments that revolved around the old themes. A milliner was paid £10, 17s, 11d "for the stuff for the masque of King Arthur," model horses cost £33, 17s, 6d and bargemen earned 16s 8d for ferrying the players to and from the spectacle. In order to sustain some sense of Camelot on the banks of the Thames, this was presumably regarded as money well spent.

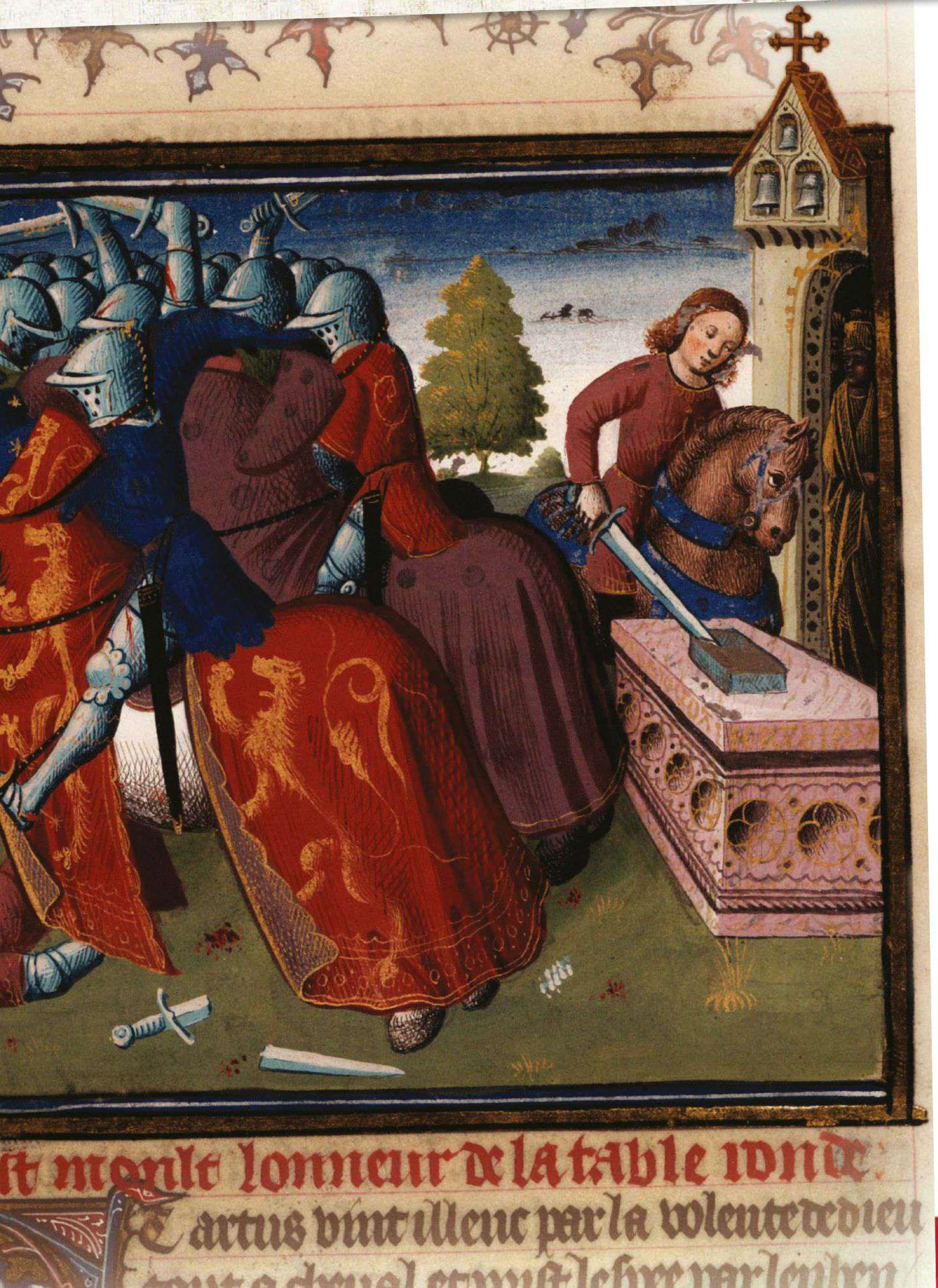
Not that Arthur's cultural trajectory would always be so smooth during the Tudor era. For some, he remained a peerless archetype of noble kingship. In his *Arthur of Brytayn*, John Bourchier continued to insist that "it is delectable to all human nature to read and to hear the ancient noble histories of the chivalrous feats and martial prowesses of the victorious knights of times past."

Arthur's reputation would even enjoy a much-needed boost during Elizabeth's reign when John Dee (who named his son Arthur) pointed to him as forerunner and template of a new age of conquest and overseas adventure. Others began to look less kindly on the ancient king, however.

We began with Nathaniel Baxter's strictures and they had been foreshadowed by the complaints

"Kings had long been invoking all-conquering King Arthur to legitimise their exploits"




st moult lonneur de la table ronde
artus vint illeuc par la volente de dieu

> “Tudor scholars had begun to look with growing scepticism at the legend of Arthur”

of Roger Ascham. He poured scorn on the likes of Thomas Malory, in whose books “those be counted the noblest knights that do kill the most men without any quarrel and commit foulest adulteries by subtlest shifts.” Worse yet, Tudor scholars had begun to look with growing scepticism at both the supposed significance of Arthur’s achievements and the basic issue of whether he had been a genuine historical figure. Polydore Vergil, writing in Henry’s reign, admitted that, “even now the common folk praise Arthur to the skies” but he wondered if we were really supposed to believe all the fantastical tales of conquest and failed to see how Arthur could possibly have been buried at Glastonbury since, “…in the days of Arthur, this abbey was not built.”

The battle over veracity had been joined but, for many, Arthur was always about more than legend and, in response to Vergil’s misgivings, John Leland offered an elegant, if ill-tempered, riposte. “Poliodorus the Italian,” Leland scoffed, was “so faint-hearted, lukewarm and so negligent that he makes me not only laugh but also to be angry.” One imagines that Leland’s employer, Henry VIII, not to mention Henry’s late father, would gladly have echoed this rallying cry for a historical King Arthur.

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The rise of a King

Tall, handsome and dangerously power-hungry, Henry VIII's early reign was defined by war and women

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Fickle friends & foul foes 1509-1526
Meet the allies and enemies of King Henry VIII

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Young Henry
How an unexpected king transformed his nation

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Field of the Cloth of Gold
Take a tour of the summit where kingly egos soared

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Catherine of Aragon: Warlady
Famously loyal and determined, Henry's first wife ensured victory against the Scots in his absence

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Bessie and the bastard
Discover the story of Henry's mistress and illegitimate son

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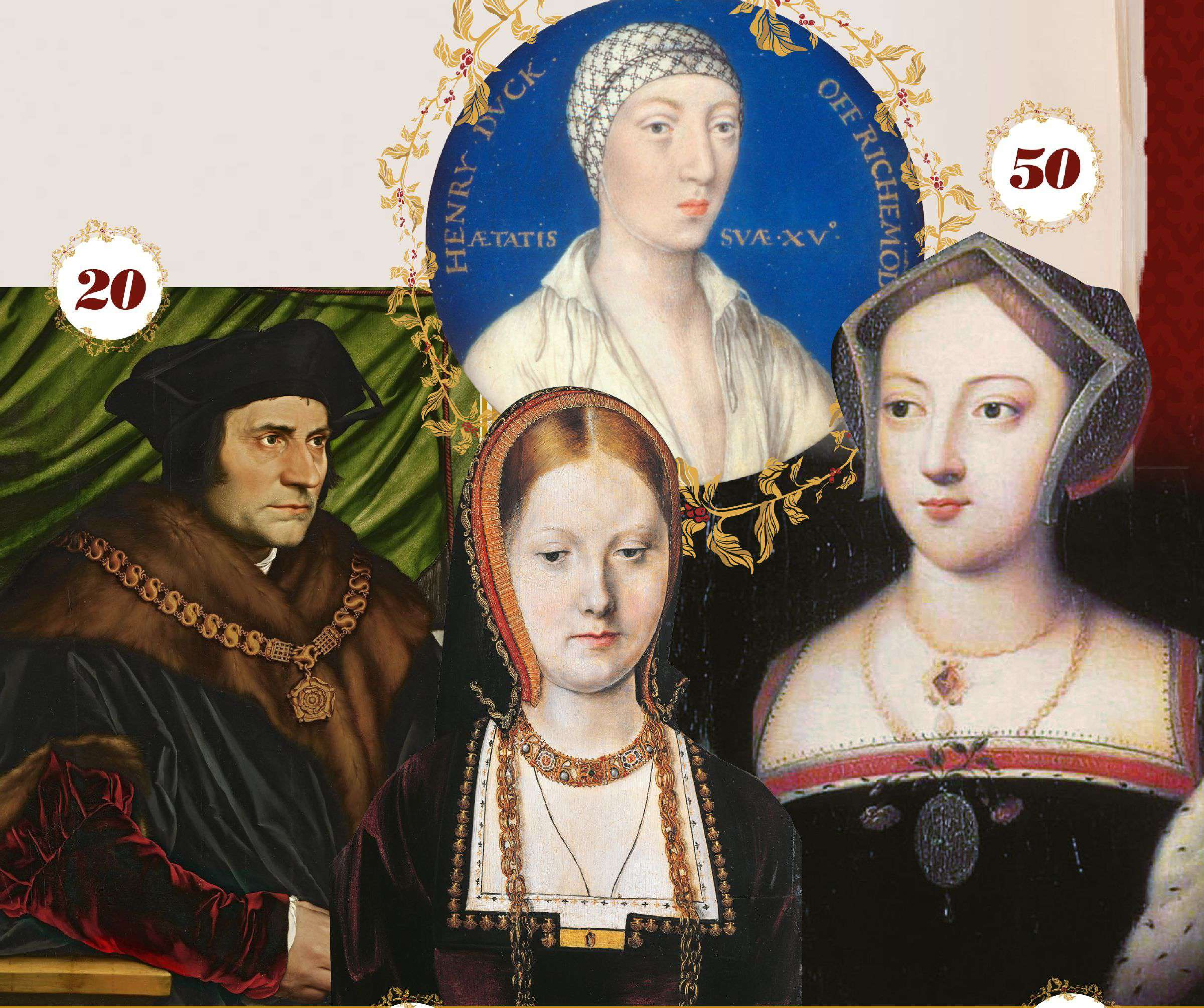
Battle for the bedchamber
Groomed for greatness, find out how Mary Boleyn became the king's obsession


HENRY DVCK OFF RICHEMOD
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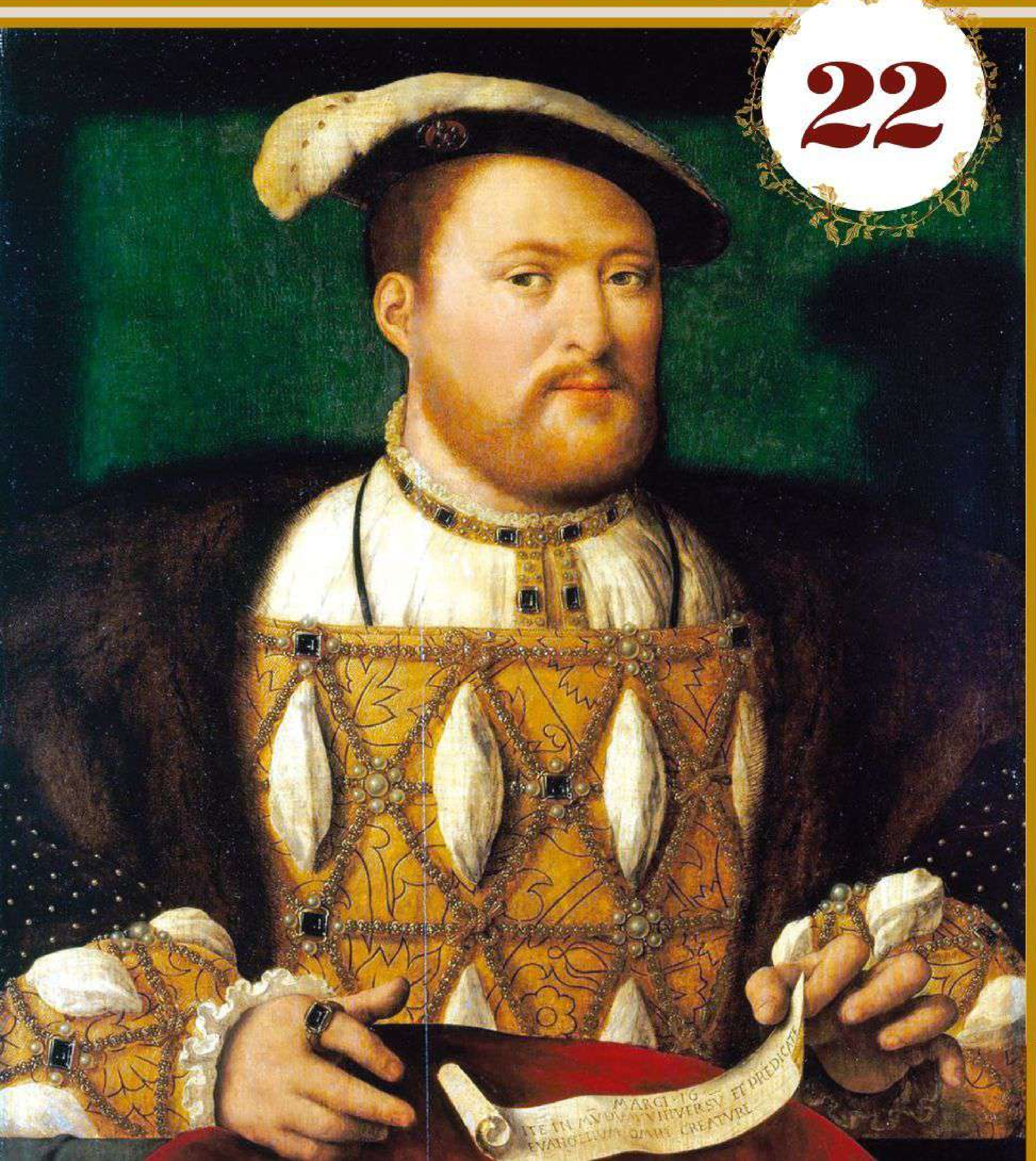

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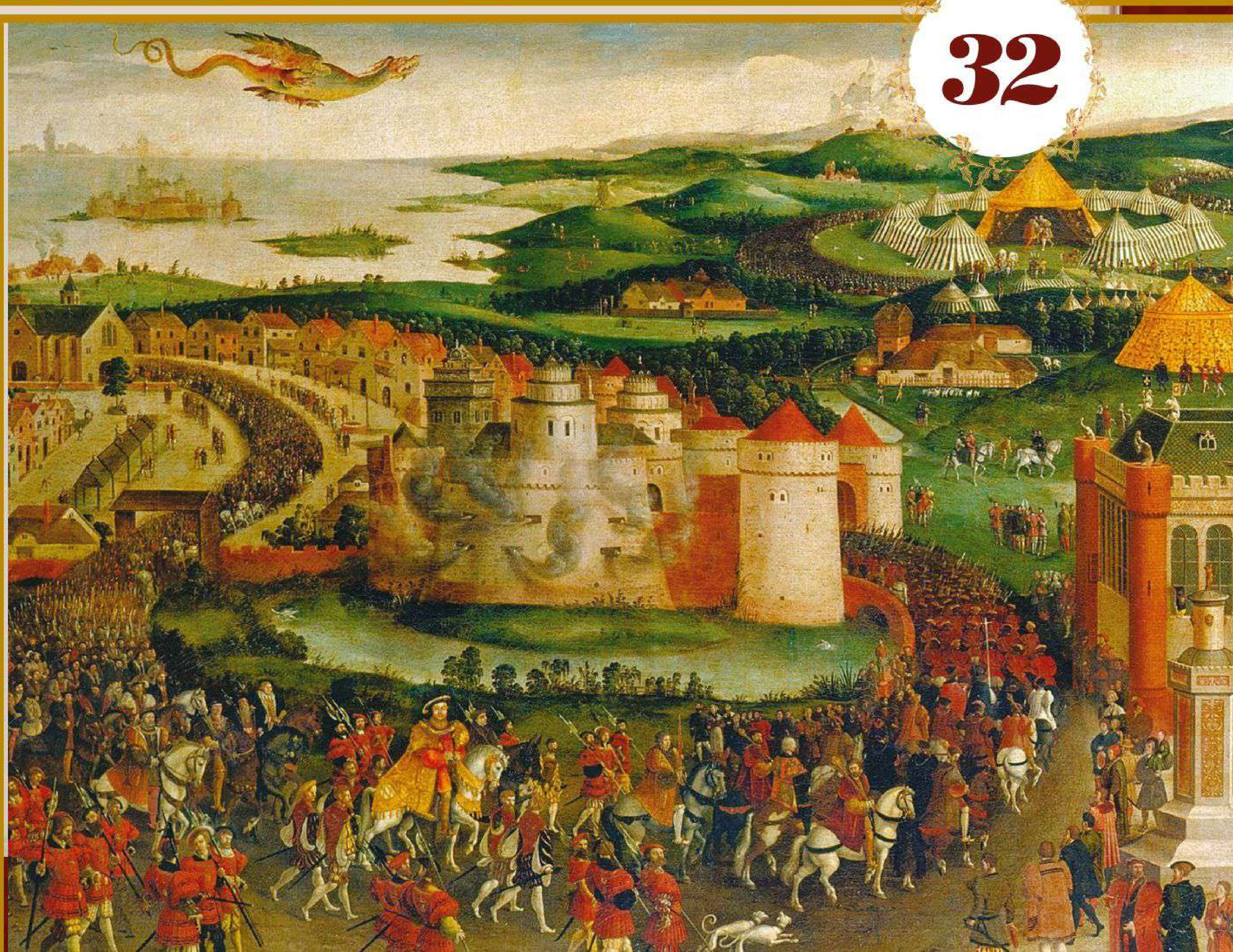

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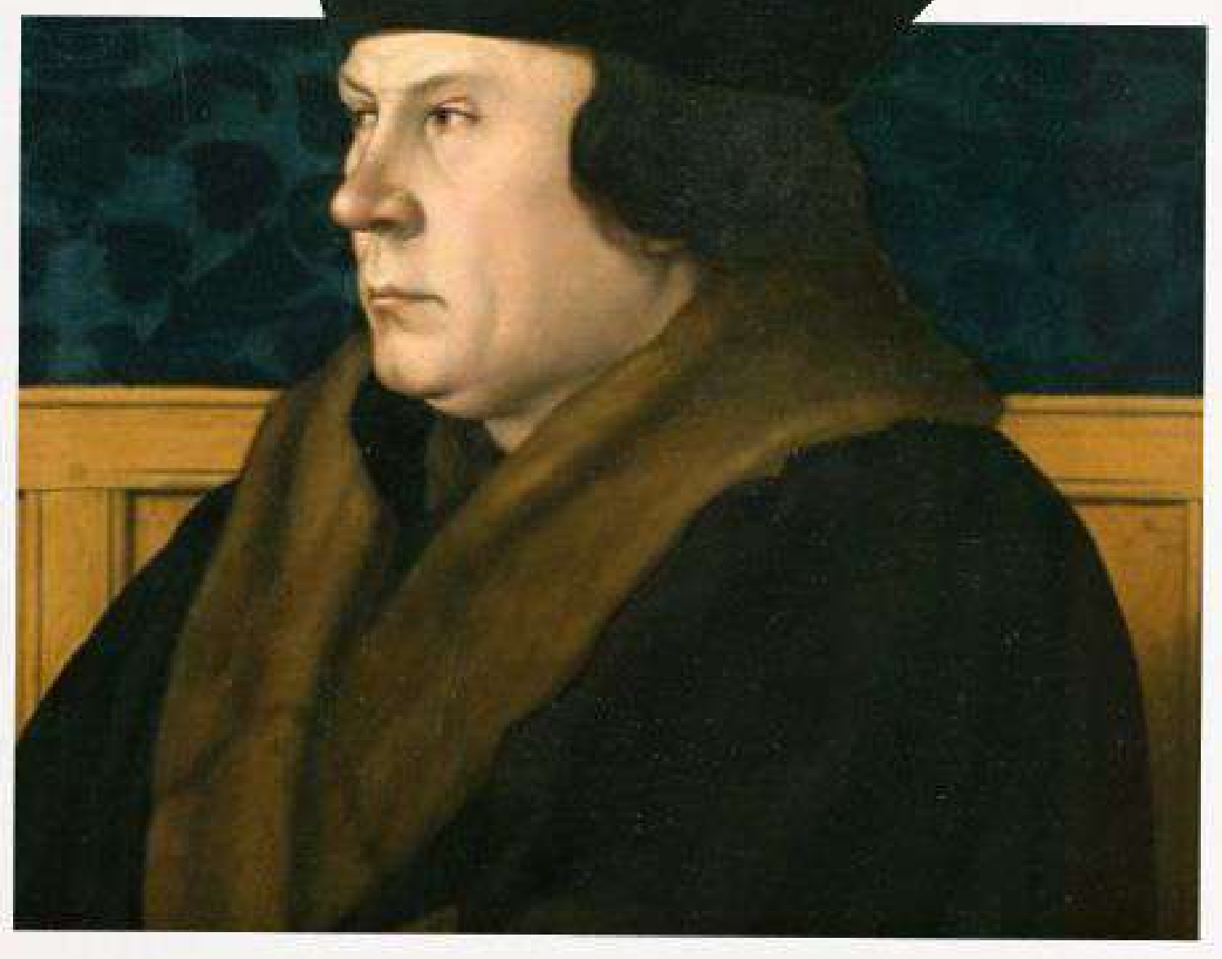
Henry VIII's HIT LIST 1509-1526

In young Henry's early reign, it seemed that his crowd of loyal servants and friends were destined for greatness...

Words ALICEA FRANCIS



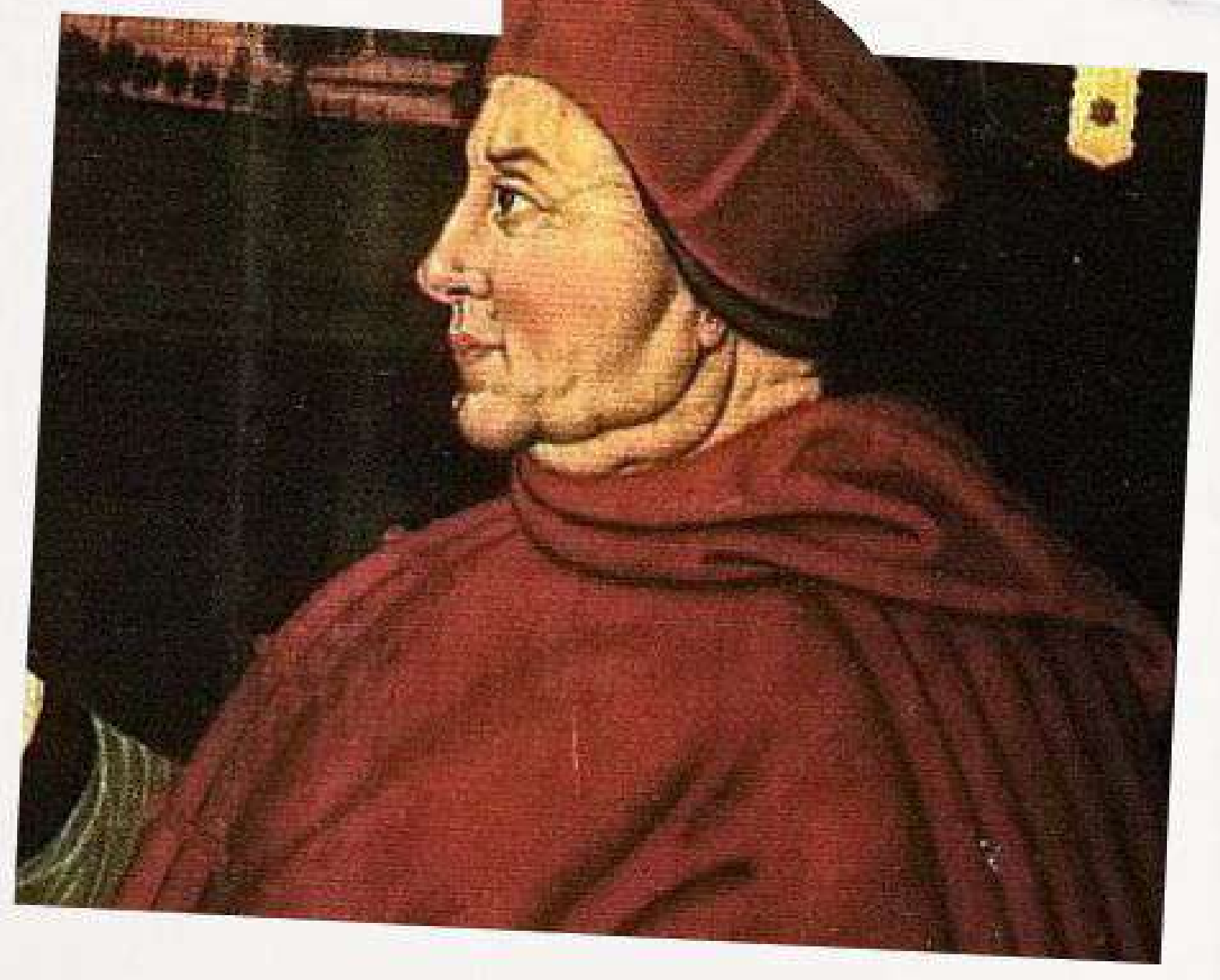
THOMAS CROMWELL

Faithful before his dramatic fall

b.1485-d.1540

Friend or Foe? Friend

Born in south London, Cromwell was a self-confessed "ruffian" as a young man. After running away from home aged around 15, he served as a mercenary in the French army and later lived in Italy and the Low Countries. Around 1515, he returned to England and served in the household of Cardinal Wolsey. Under Wolsey, his career flourished and he became an MP in 1523. By this time, Henry had been married to Catherine of Aragon for over a decade and she hadn't had a son. After a string of miscarriages and stillbirths, Henry's attention had wandered and he was drawn to Anne Boleyn, who was young, beautiful and feisty. The king was determined to make Anne his new queen. Wolsey was tasked with seeking approval from the pope, with the assistance of his loyal servant Thomas Cromwell.



CARDINAL WOLSEY

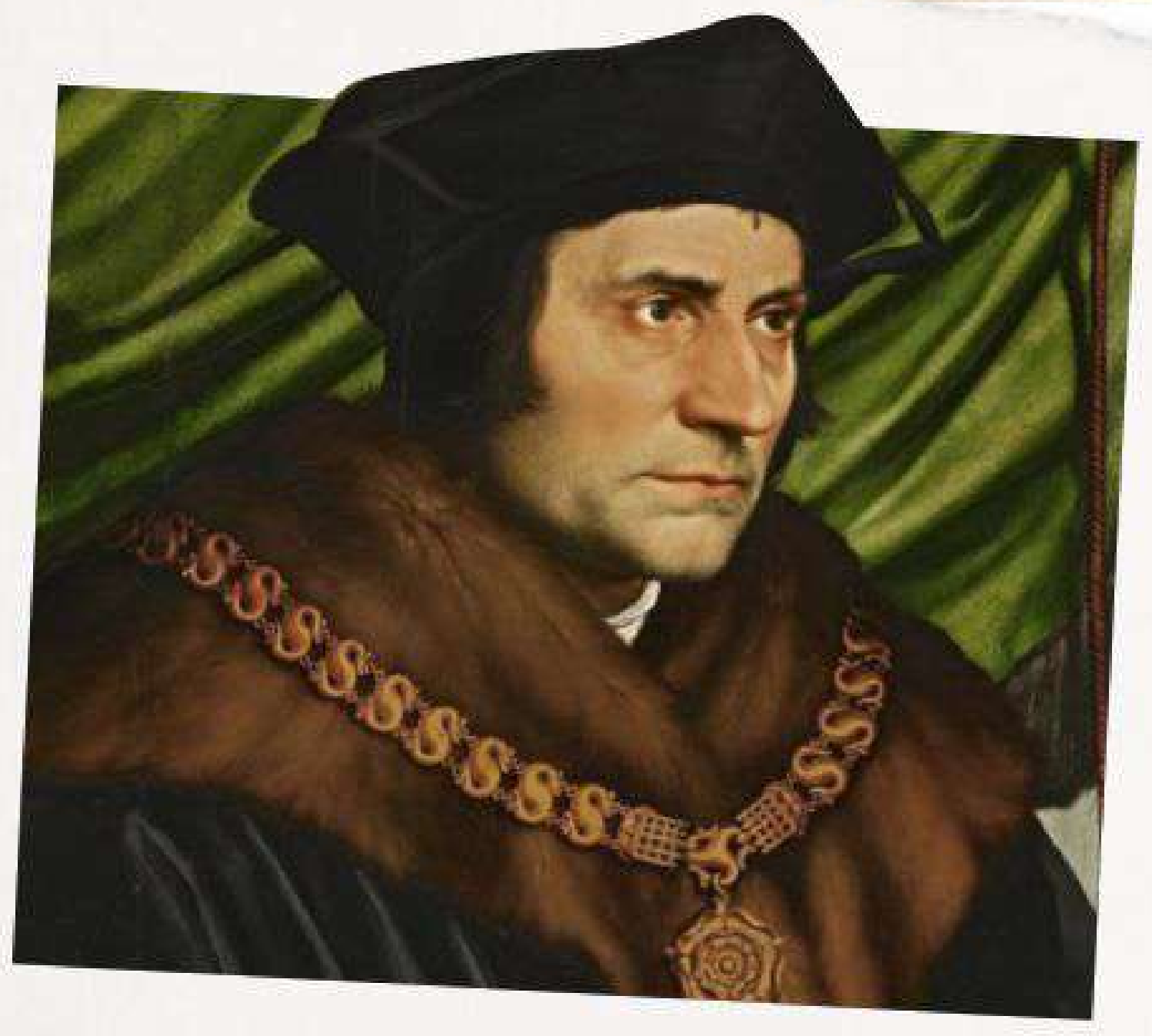
The crowning of the Other King

b.1473-d.1530

Friend or Foe? Friend

The son of a butcher, Wolsey was ordained as a priest in 1498, became chaplain to the archbishop of Canterbury in 1502, entering Henry VII's service in 1507. It was following the coronation of Henry VIII in 1509 that he really entered the limelight. The young king was disinterested in the affairs of state and, seeing Wolsey's industrious nature, gave him almost complete control of England's foreign policy.

But there was also a great deal of cunning involved in Wolsey's rise. Despite previously being anti-war, he changed his mind on the matter when the king pushed for an invasion of France. He was made archbishop of York, a cardinal and lord chancellor, the king's chief adviser. So great was the cardinal's power that by the end of the decade he had become known as an 'alter-rex' – an 'other king'.



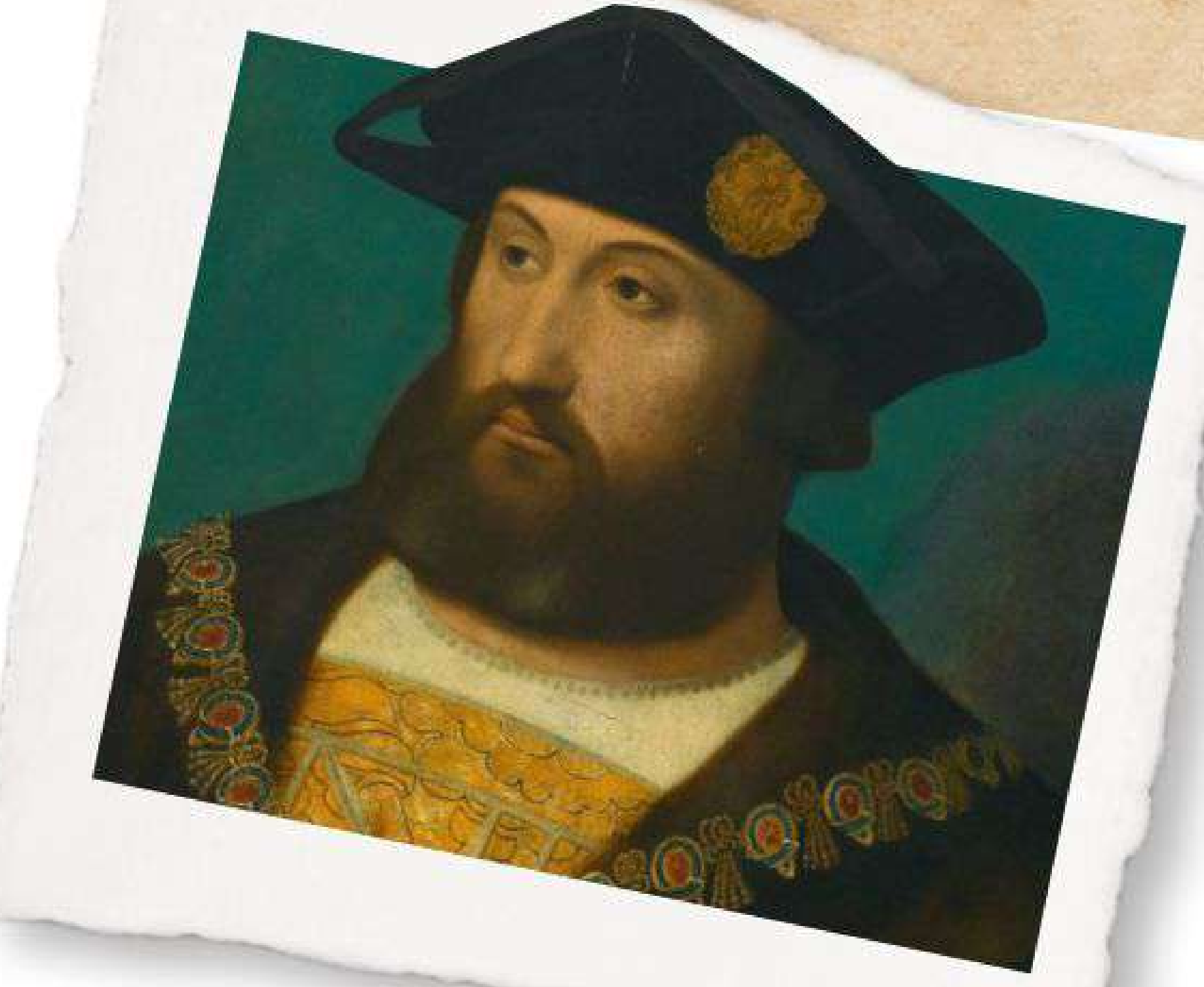
THOMAS MORE

The king's good servant

b.1478-d.1535

Friend or Foe? Friend

More began his story in the king's favour and was one of his most trusted advisors. He had pursued a career in law, becoming undersheriff for London in 1510 and later entering Henry's service. So successful was his role as secretary and adviser that he received a knighthood. But his Catholic religion always remained at the centre of his world. It's believed that he wore a hair shirt and practised self-flagellation, and at one point seriously contemplated abandoning the law in favour of life in a monastery. As well as writing several political and historical commentaries, he also wrote pamphlets defending Catholic orthodoxy and condemning Martin Luther's Reformation in Germany. Before the break with Rome, his piety was met with great approval. But things were about to change dramatically.



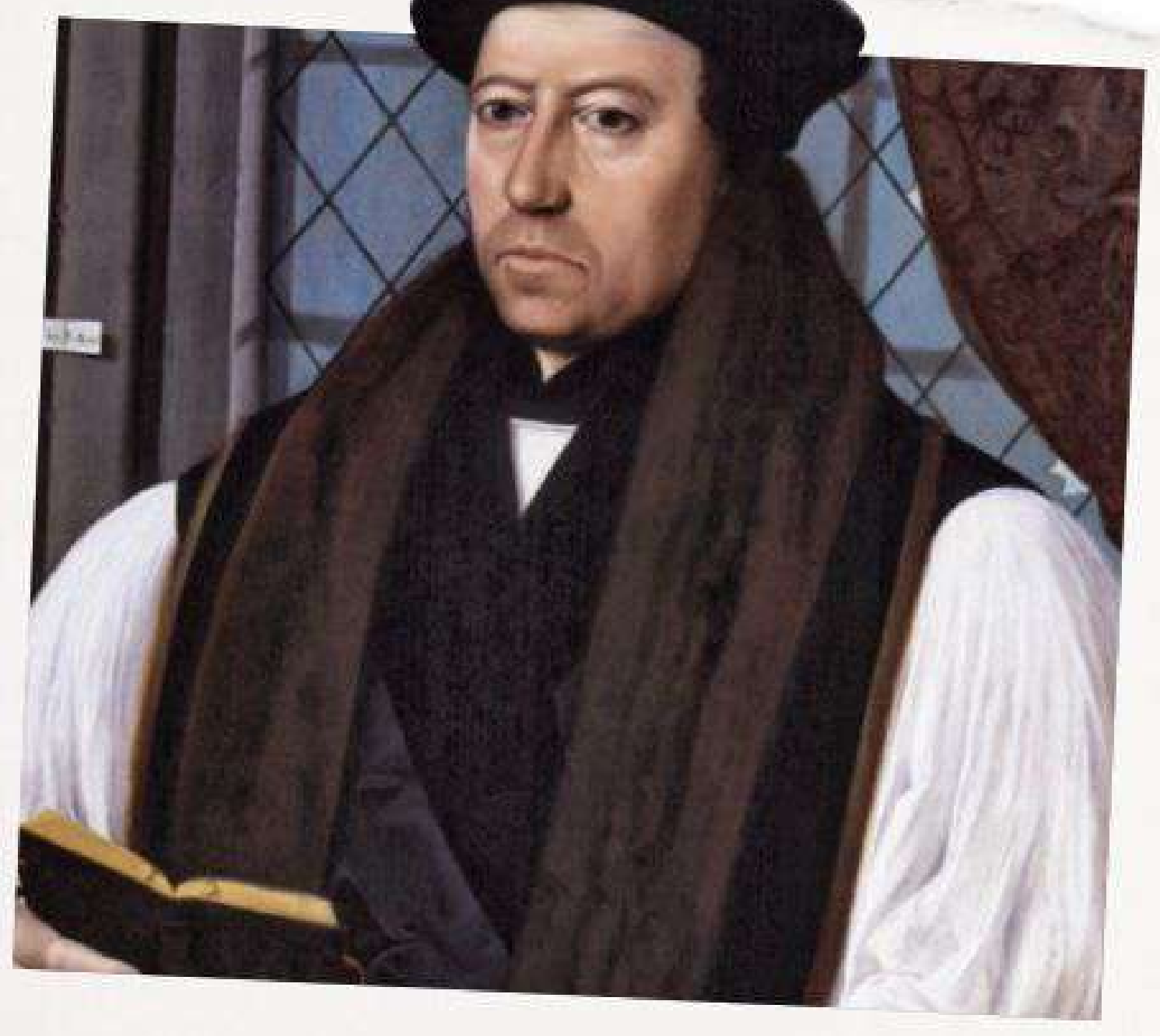
CHARLES BRANDON

A right royal fallout

b.1485-d.1545

Friend or Foe? Foe

Charles Brandon was one year old when his father was killed fighting for the Tudors at the Battle of Bosworth. His surviving family moved to the royal court and he struck up a close bond with the future King Henry VIII. Upon Henry's coronation in 1509, Brandon was bestowed with land and titles, becoming master of the horse and duke of Suffolk. But their relationship would be put to the test when Brandon defied Henry in 1515. He had fallen for Henry's sister Mary, who was married to Louis XII of France. When Louis died, Brandon was sent to negotiate her return to England and had sworn that he would keep things professional, but they wed secretly in 1515. Henry was furious and it seemed Brandon would face the death penalty. Incredibly, he persuaded Henry to forgive him and escaped with a fine.



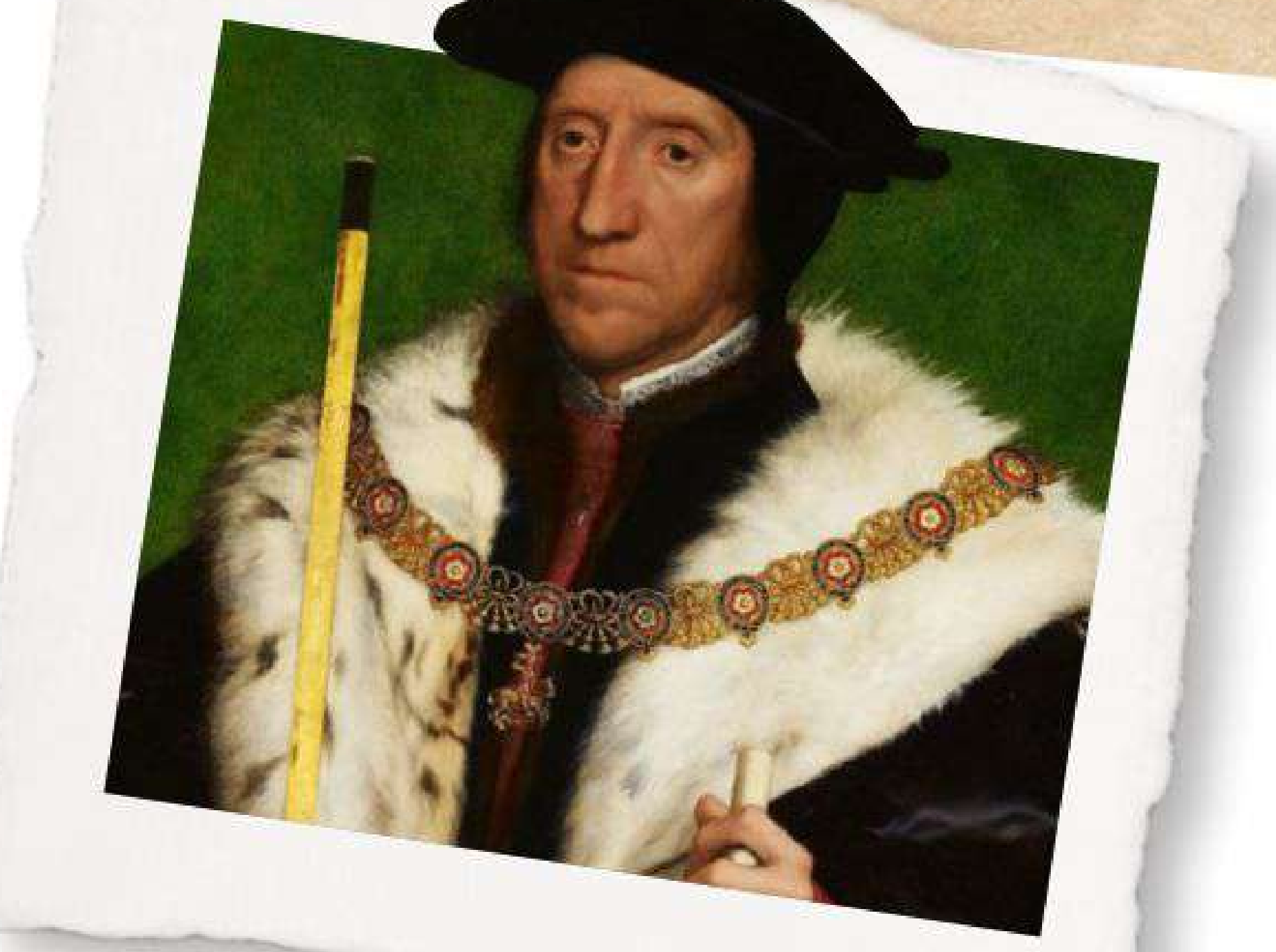
THOMAS CRANMER

A rebel against Rome

b.1489-d.1556

Friend or Foe? Friend

Cranmer's father only had enough land to pass onto the eldest of his three sons. The younger two, Thomas and Edmund, were to pursue a career in the clergy. Thomas was educated at Jesus College, Cambridge and was elected into the fellowship. Shortly after, he took a wife and was stripped of his fellowship. He became a reader at Cambridge but when his wife died in childbirth, his fellowship was restored. By 1520, he had been ordained and had made a name for himself as one of the greatest theologians of his time. He began to meet regularly with a group that would become known as 'Little Germany'. It discussed the issues surrounding Catholicism that had been raised by Martin Luther and by 1525, at least one of Cranmer's prayers advocated the abolition of papal power in England.



THOMAS HOWARD

The quest to restore the family name

b.1473-d.1554

Friend or Foe? Friend

Thomas Howard had to make his own name for himself. His father and grandfather had fought for Richard III in the Battle of Bosworth and following the Tudor victory, the family's titles were forfeited. But Thomas proved his worth as a page in Henry VII's court and later as an able soldier. He and Henry VIII grew to be close friends. He was made Lord Admiral and successfully commanded English troops against the Scots at the Battle of Flodden. In return, his father was created duke of Norfolk and Thomas earl of Surrey. The next decade would see him serving in Ireland and France, and becoming Lord Treasurer. However, his penchant for war brought him into conflict with Cardinal Wolsey and, as a result, he spent much of the next two years away from court.

© Getty; WIKI

Lover, gambler, cruel tyrant? Young Henry

How an unexpected king transformed a nation

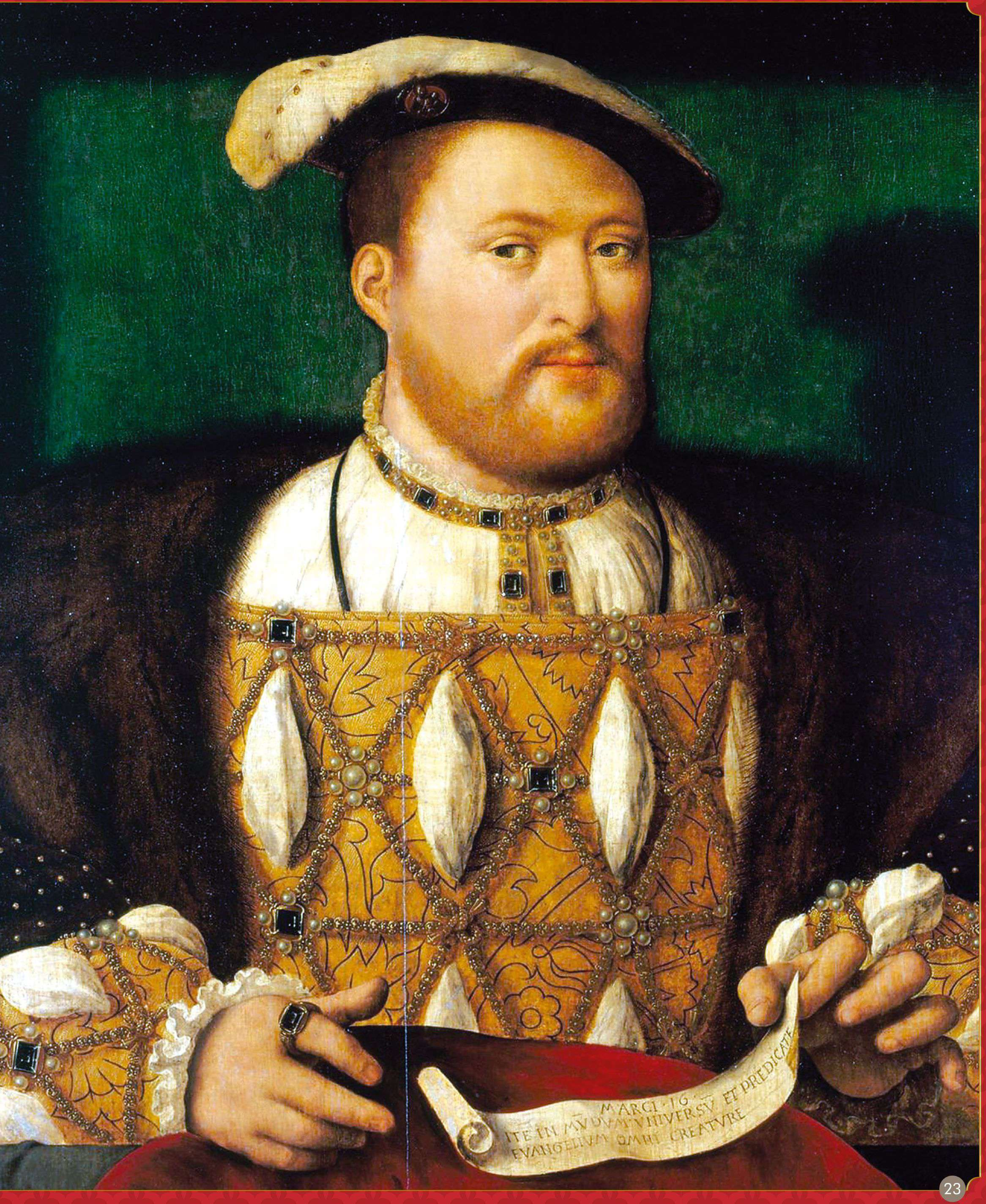
Words DEREK WILSON

Henry VIII was a monster who single-handedly revolutionised the religious and social structure of England, plunged the nation into needless wars and ruined the economy – a condemnation few historians would disagree with. The second Tudor monarch left his successors a complex and unstable legacy, the implications of which took decades to sort out. But all this turmoil – the marriages made and unmade, the plundering of the church, the religious policy, the wars with France and Scotland, the profligate expenditure – all relate to the last 13 years of Henry's life. If we really want to understand this monarch, we need to widen our focus, and particularly to consider his earlier life. What influences in his childhood, teenage and early manhood years turned him into a tyrant?

The first thing to note is that the young Henry did not at all expect to become king. For one thing, he was a younger son. Arthur, Prince of Wales, was his senior by five years – a serious, bright and hard-working young man in whom Henry VII had invested all his hopes for the dynasty. For another thing, if the previous 86 years had demonstrated anything, it was that peaceful royal succession from father to son was the exception rather than the rule. Since the deposition of Richard II in 1399, the crown of England had been tossed back and forth by noble factions, fighting under the banners of York and Lancaster. That contest was far from over when Henry Tudor overthrew Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth.

There were several potential rivals who could show descent, however tortuous, from Edward III, and enemies of the Tudor regime were also not averse to putting forth fraudulent pretenders. Not until 1497 did Henry VII foil the last serious attempt to unseat him but, even then, there remained malcontents succoured by foreign rulers who contemplated invasion. For the first ten and a half years of his life, Prince Henry entertained little thought of one day being king. At the age of three, he was created Duke of York and invested with wide estates, largely in the north. According to one source, there was even some suggestion that young Henry was destined to be made Archbishop of Canterbury. Whether as territorial magnate or leader of the church, the boy's prospects certainly did not include kingship. He seldom saw his brother. The royal children had separate establishments and were brought up in various palaces close to London. In 1493, when Henry was only two, Arthur was moved to Ludlow Castle on the Welsh border to establish an even closer relationship with his principality.

The lack of regnal expectations meant that the little duke enjoyed a freer childhood than would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ITE IN MVNDVM VNIVERSV ET PREDICATE
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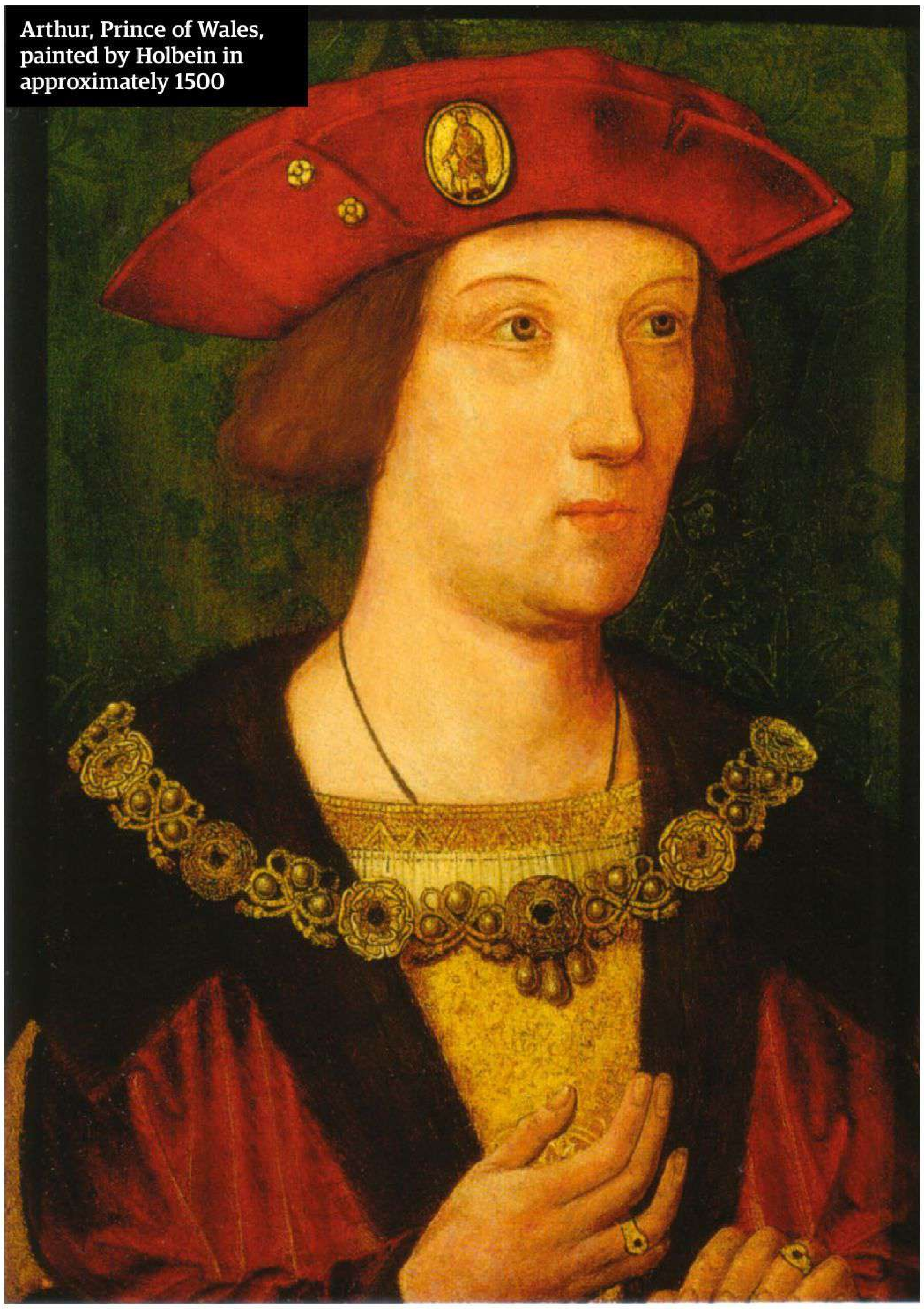
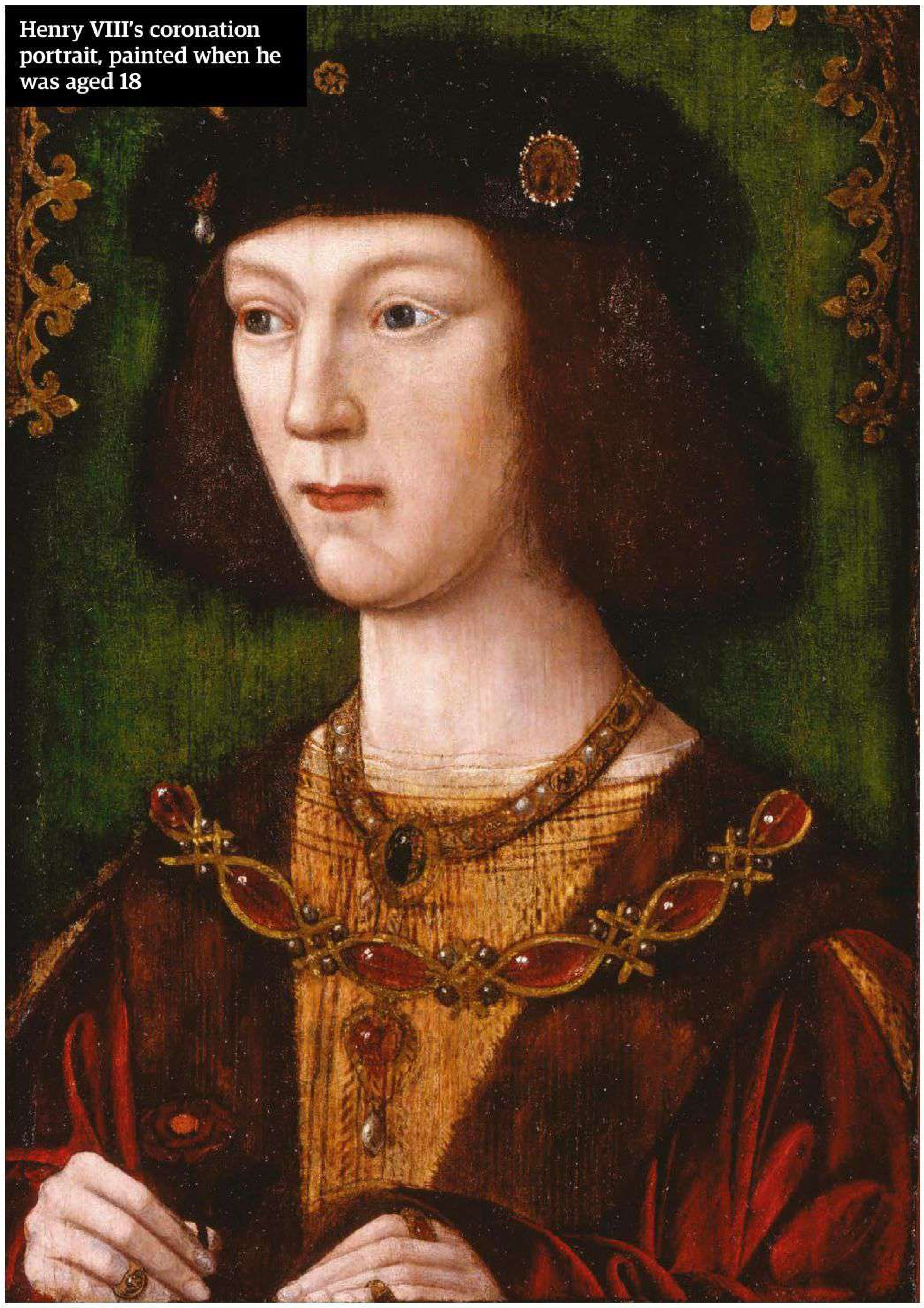


Arthur, Prince of Wales, painted by Holbein in approximately 1500



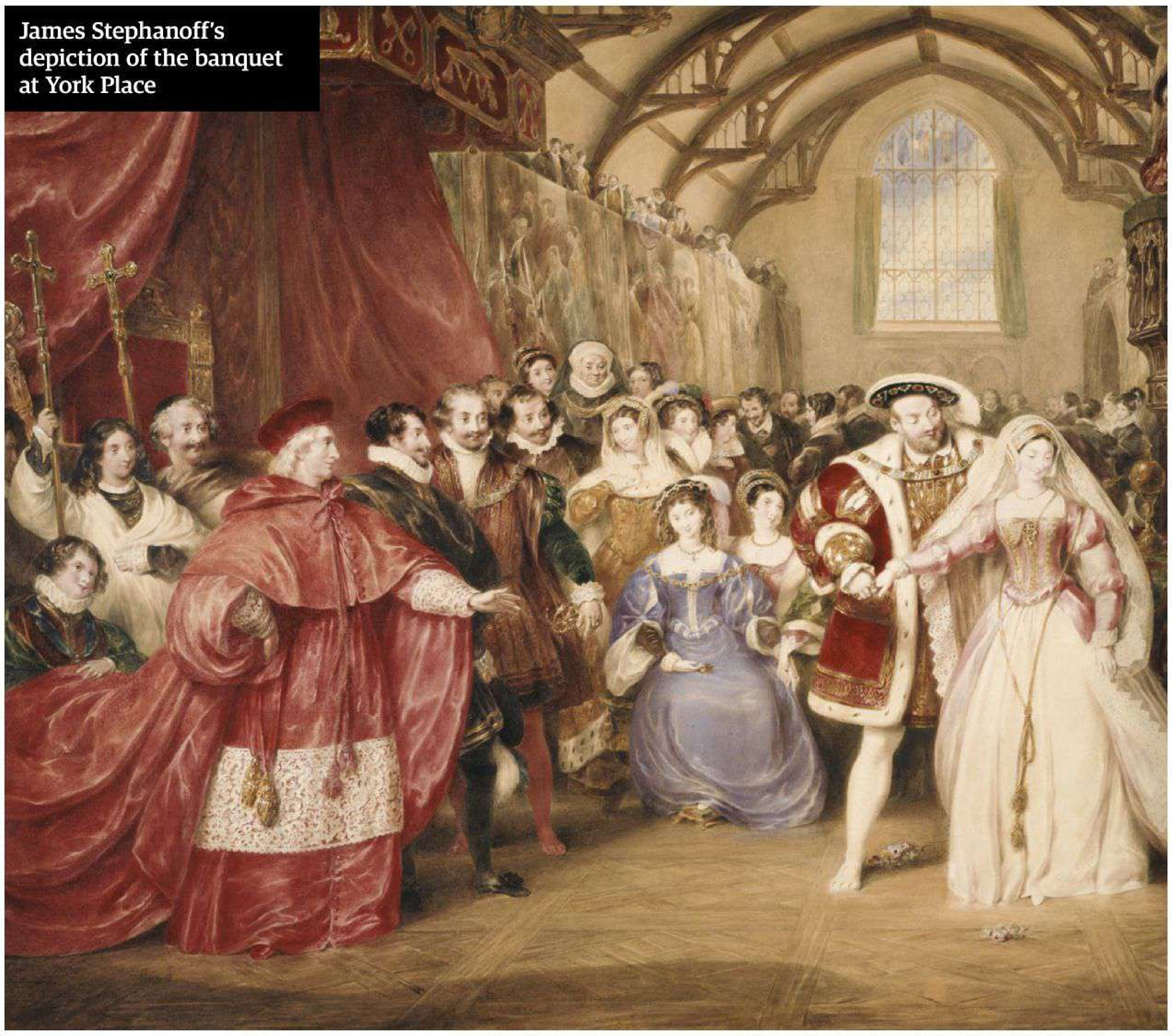
Henry VIII's coronation portrait, painted when he was aged 18

otherwise have been the case. For example – and this is surely significant – no proposals were considered for his marriage. Royal children were important as pawns in the game of international politics. It was the norm for princes and princesses to be engaged to their counterparts in other lands long before the onset of puberty. Henry had no such union imposed on him until after Arthur's death. In matters of the heart, personal choice came to weigh more heavily with him than duty.

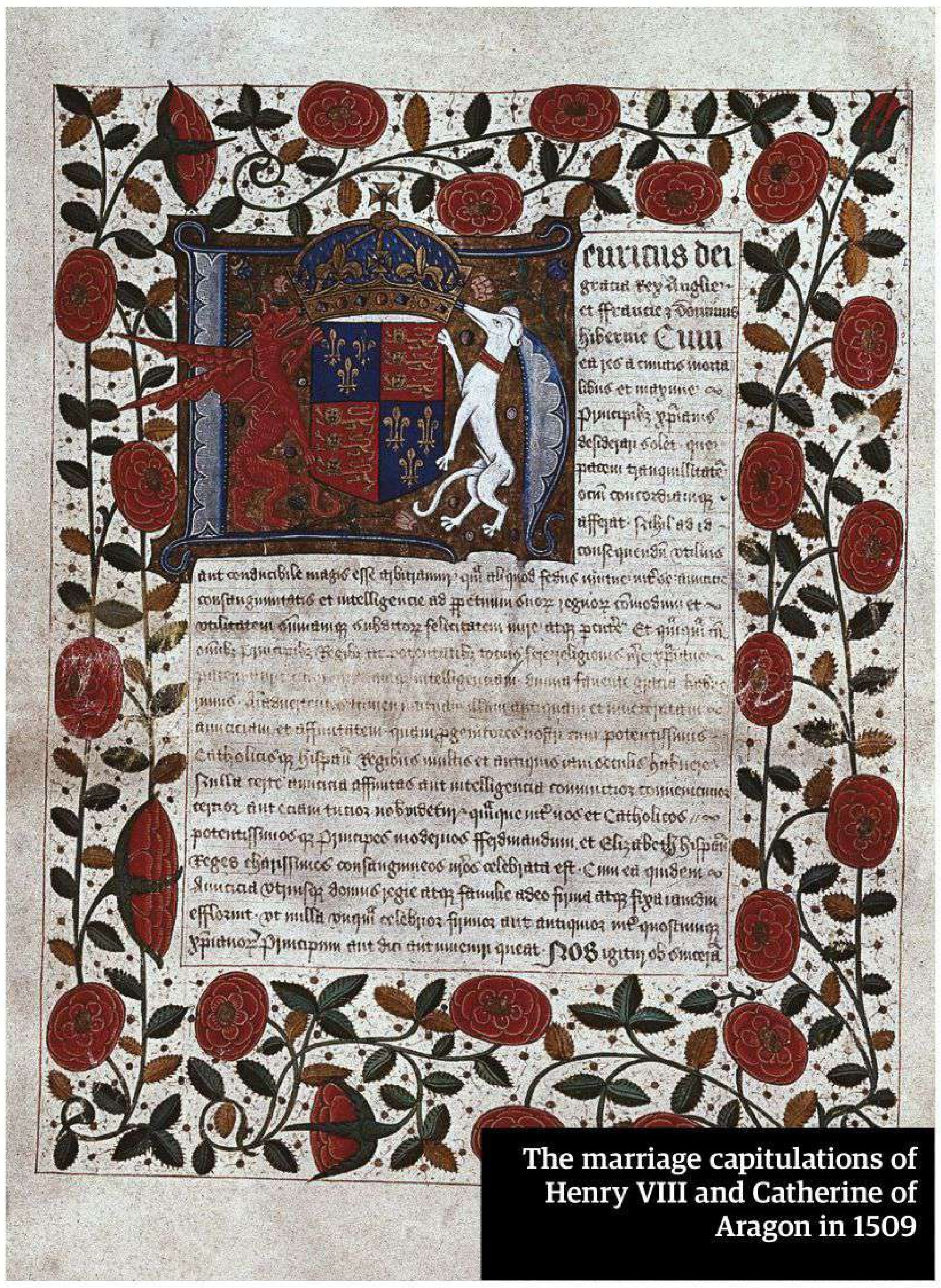
It has often been suggested that Henry was more Yorkist than Lancastrian; that he took after his mother's family rather than his father's. Though we should not make too much of this, there is some point to the observation. Portraits of the two Tudor princes show marked physical differences. Arthur was slim and sharp-featured with hooded eyes, like his paternal grandmother Lady Margaret Beaufort. Henry, by contrast fair haired and "chubby", had a distinct resemblance to his maternal grandfather, Edward IV. What is beyond doubt is that he was closer to his mother than his father. In fact, the world of Henry's childhood was a female world. For some years he shared a household with his two sisters, Margaret and Mary, and was more familiar with the distaff side of the family, presided over by Queen Elizabeth of York and the formidable Queen Mother, Lady Beaufort. By rank and by personality, and as the only male in his little world, he increasingly took the lead. Cosseted by nurses and encouraged in his foibles, Henry grew into a precocious extrovert.

Eyewitness accounts of the boy Henry and his environment are almost nonexistent. This means that such cameos as we have are scrutinised carefully for clues about the growing boy's character. One such account, from the pen of the leading Dutch scholar of the day, Desiderius Erasmus, tells how, in 1499, Erasmus and his friend, Thomas More, were granted an audience with the royal children at Eltham Palace. They were formally received by the siblings in the midst of a crowded court. Though Margaret was the eldest, it was eight-year-old Henry who played host. He graciously received from More a Latin poem the lawyer had had the presence of mind to bring. Erasmus noted that the boy combined "dignity of mind" with "remarkable courtesy". But the Dutchman had committed a faux pas. He had neglected to bring a gift. No comment was made and he thought he had got away with it, but during dinner, Henry passed him a note that read, "Have you got something for me?" The embarrassed scholar had to work for three days to produce ten pages of elegant Latin, suitably decorated with colourful illumination. The image this incident presents is of a self-assured boy already reasonably proficient in Latin. We know he could also converse in French, the diplomats' lingua franca.

It goes without saying that the prince's education was in the hands of the best teachers to be found. One of them, the poet and dramatist John Skelton, wrote various texts for Henry's guidance. The list confirms that the curriculum included Latin grammar, rhetoric, moral exhortation, etiquette and history. This last was not history as we might think of it – a chronological account of major events based on reliable sources. It was a mishmash of heroic legends and chivalric adventures that linked England's past with the glories of Rome, the



James Stephanoff's depiction of the banquet at York Place



The marriage capitulations of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon in 1509

achievements of Charlemagne and the myths of Arthur and his Round Table. This diet of noble and patriotic fare was one deliberately fostered by Henry VII. It was central to his strategy for selling the new dynasty. By marrying Edward IV's daughter, he intended to close the sorry sequence of wars between Lancaster and York and provide his realm with a united future. But also with a united and unifying past. When he had hurried his pregnant wife to Winchester, the ancient capital of England, to deliver his first child, and when that child was christened 'Arthur', the first Tudor was tying his dynasty into England's ancient and glorious pseudo-history. This was the narrative that provided the framework for young Henry's sense of identity. He read Thomas Malory's Le Morte Darthur, recently printed by William Caxton, and the Chronicles of Froissart, with their exaltation of chivalric combat.

Chivalry featured prominently in the court entertainments Henry loved. These included singing, recitation of tales and poems, performance of masques (just beginning to emerge as a courtly art form), dancings and 'disguisings' (fancy dress parties) and – most spectacular of all tournaments – the brash displays of martial prowess that particularly entranced the young duke. He was an eager participant in the lighter side of court life, and in 1501, he played a prominent role in the most lavish sequence of royal spectacles to be seen in England since the glory days of Edward IV. No one could have foreseen that they and the events that followed would mark the end of carefree Henry's childhood.

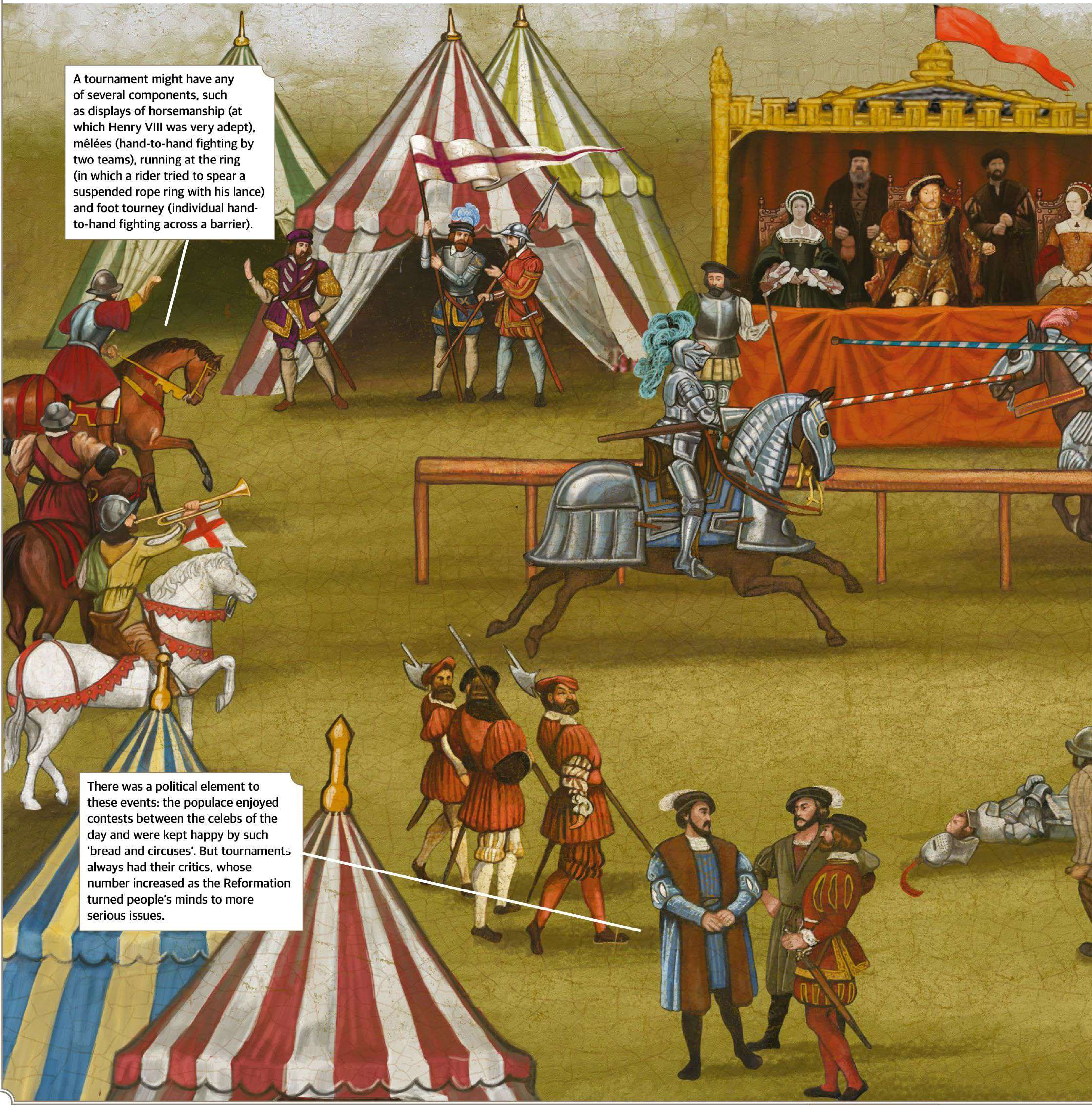
> "Perhaps Henry VII realised that his second son was never going to be another Arthur"

Henry VII had spent the first dozen years of his reign seeing off Yorkist challenges and staking a claim for his dynasty among the ruling houses of Europe. Now, negotiations had reached extremely satisfactory conclusions for the marriage of Princess Margaret to James IV of Scotland and, more importantly, the marriage of Prince Arthur to Catherine, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. Henry VII pulled out all the stops in celebrating this major diplomatic coup. On 12 November, Catherine and her suite were welcomed by Londoners with a sequence of allegorical pageants as they passed through the city. Two days later the ten-year-old Prince Henry played a lead role in the royal wedding at St Paul's. He met the bride at the door of the cathedral and escorted her down the long nave to the high altar. After the ceremony, he walked behind the newlyweds as they left the church and emerged before the cheering crowds. Then began a week of festivities – four great banquets, numerous disguisings and elaborate tableaux. One such featured two pageant carts decorated as mountains. The first represented the rocky uplands of Spain and was radiant with gold, silver, lead, copper, sulphur, crystal, coral and amber. The other, symbolising England and joined to it by a golden chain, was covered with trees, flowers and fruits amid which sat courtiers playing tabors, lutes, harps and recorders. One chronicler noted that the young duke entered so energetically into the dancing that he had to put off his outer garments. But what was even more exciting for him was the public tournament held in a special arena before Westminster Hall, the participants competing, not only with lance and sword, but also in the splendour of their apparel. In January, more high jinks accompanied the marriage by proxy of Princess Margaret to her Scottish bridegroom. Once again, Henry featured prominently in the celebrations. The Tudor star was in the ascendant. Then, on 2 April 1502, Arthur died in distant Ludlow.

Everything changed. Commentators agree that it changed Henry VII. All the old insecurities resurfaced. He lost his Spanish alliance. The hopes of his enemies were revived. The future of the dynasty now rested on his under-age son, and that carried with it the threat of a return to the days of noble factions vying for power. To add to his

Tudor tournaments

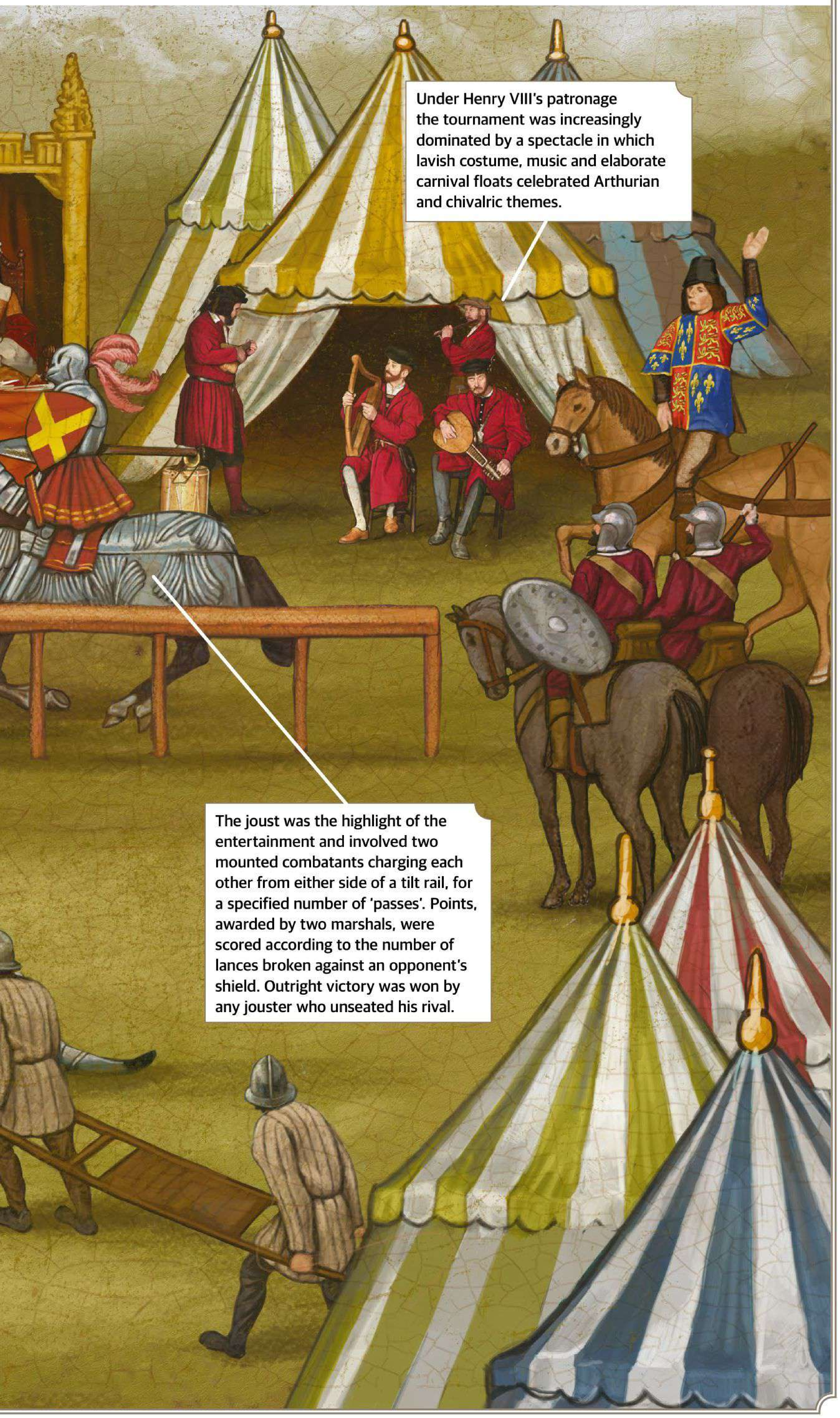
The elaborate spectacle of strength that flourished under Henry VIII's patronage



A tournament might have any of several components, such as displays of horsemanship (at which Henry VIII was very adept), mêlées (hand-to-hand fighting by two teams), running at the ring (in which a rider tried to spear a suspended rope ring with his lance) and foot tourney (individual hand-to-hand fighting across a barrier).

There was a political element to these events: the populace enjoyed contests between the celebs of the day and were kept happy by such 'bread and circuses'. But tournaments always had their critics, whose number increased as the Reformation turned people's minds to more serious issues.

Picture a sports match in which several teams enter to the blare of trumpets, players on powerful motor bikes and wearing elaborate, gaudy costumes. When play begins it takes the form of individual and group tackling and kicking competitions. That is how a 16th century tournament might translate to the modern idiom – all very macho and glamorous but having as little to do with warfare. By Henry VIII's time the tournament had become an expensive, elaborate entertainment in which members of a small knightly elite showed off their skills in types of combat becoming increasingly irrelevant in warfare dominated by archers and artillery.



Under Henry VIII's patronage the tournament was increasingly dominated by a spectacle in which lavish costume, music and elaborate carnival floats celebrated Arthurian and chivalric themes.

The joust was the highlight of the entertainment and involved two mounted combatants charging each other from either side of a tilt rail, for a specified number of 'passes'. Points, awarded by two marshals, were scored according to the number of lances broken against an opponent's shield. Outright victory was won by any jouster who unseated his rival.

> "Henry spent lavishly on anything that would enhance the splendour of his court"

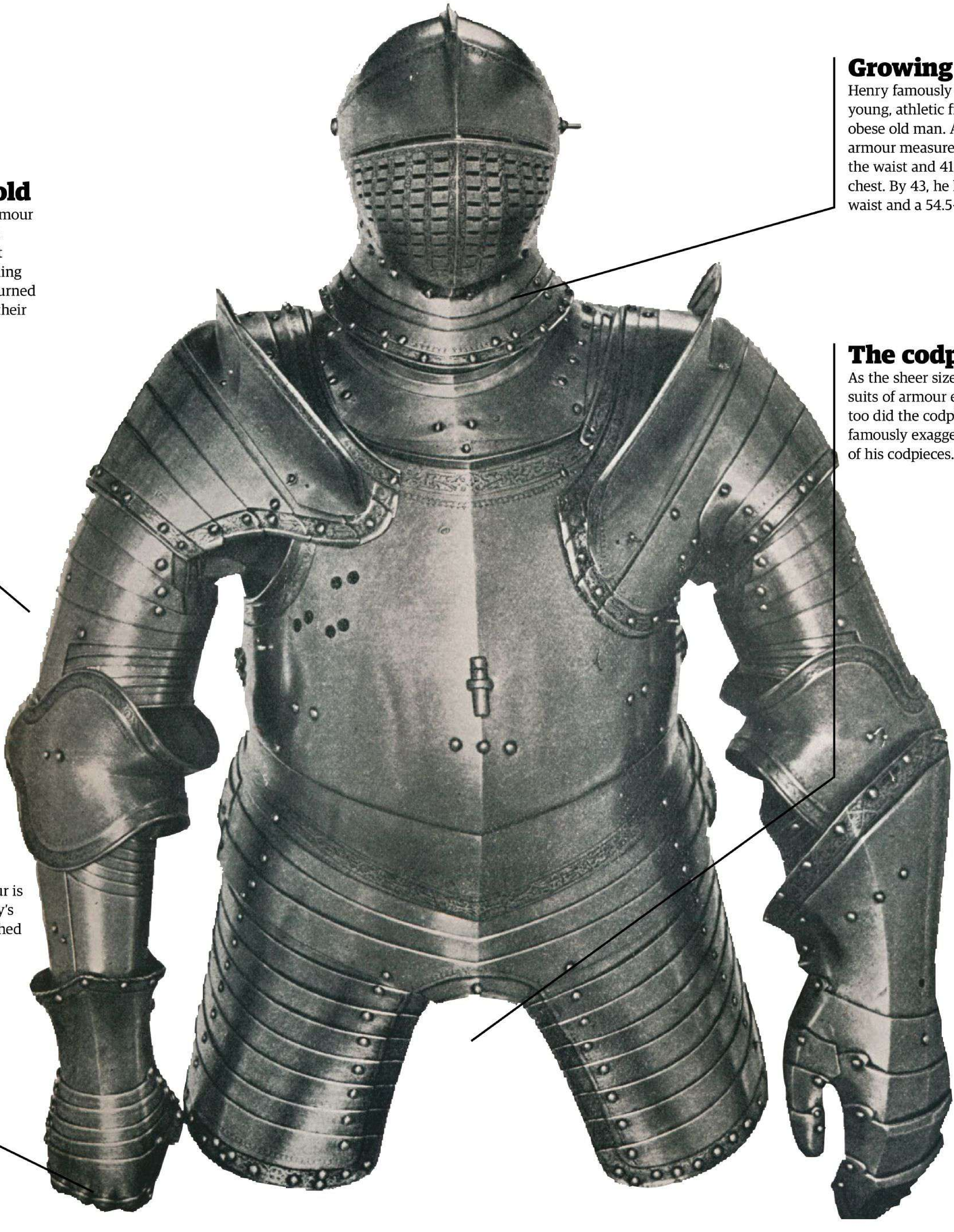
woes, Queen Elizabeth died ten months later. From this moment, the aged king became the suspicious, unscrupulous miser-monarch that has left its image in the history books. The Tudor ship was drifting and new anchors had to be swiftly thrown out. The king devised cunning ways to control the aristocracy and inhibit any possibility of rebellion. David Starkey succinctly describes the last years of the old king as "a reign of fiscal terror." Money filched from the magnates swelled the treasury and provided a well-filled war chest in case of trouble.

Something else that changed dramatically was the father-son dynamic. The Duke of York had scarcely known his father and had enjoyed freedom from restraint. Now he was kept at court under the king's watchful eye. His education was stepped up. Above all, he was cosseted and protected from disease, accident and conspiracy. At the very time of life when young men experiment with independence, Prince Henry's wings were clipped. He was growing into a tall, robust and athletic prince but was forbidden to participate in any sports that might be considered dangerous. Jousting, which he had long aspired to take up, was out of the question. Nor could he solace himself in court entertainments. After the death of his mother, much of the fun went out of life in the royal household.

It might have been supposed that, as part of training his heir, the king would have involved him in government decisions, given him a seat on the royal council and introduced him to parliament. Henry did none of those things. As a result, the heir to the throne experienced nothing of the daily grind of administration. Perhaps Henry VII realised that his second son was never going to be another Arthur. A growing antipathy developed between father and son. In his last years Henry VII concentrated more and more on preparing to meet his maker (and probably realising that the slate of his sins would take some wiping clean). Young Henry, for his part, as well as feeling stifled by his parent, was made increasingly aware of that parent's unpopularity. Friends and informers alike told the prince some of the things being said about the king across the land. Some looked forward to the day young Henry succeeded his father. But there were others who simply wanted 'no more Tudors'. Common sense as well as personal feelings suggested that the heir should distance himself as much as possible from the policies of his father.

Another irritant was the marriage issue. Henry VII was still sold on the Spanish alliance (and also reluctant to return the money he had received as Catherine's dowry). In 1503, it was agreed the princess would be betrothed to the new English heir. Everything was signed and settled. However, within a couple of years, Henry VII changed his mind, believing he could strike a better deal with Archduke Philip of the Netherlands. Accordingly, young Henry was earmarked as groom for Philip's daughter, Eleanor of Austria. The task of wriggling out of the Spanish match was thrust onto Prince Henry's shoulders. The 14-year-old had to endure the humiliation of appearing before the royal council and insisting that he had been forced into the Spanish match and now wished to renounce it. Was it then that Henry made up his mind that, come hell or high water, he would always choose his own wife?

Choose Catherine he certainly did – and that before the old king was even buried. Henry VII died on 21 April 1509. On 11 June, in a private ceremony at Greenwich, Henry VIII took to wife his Spanish princess. Whatever other motives he may have had – and they must have been mixed – this was an act of defiance, a breaking free from the grip of his father's iron will. Henry



Black and gold
Most of Henry VIII's armour would have been black with gold detailing, but overenthusiastic polishing in the 19th century returned the suits of armour to their metallic base.

Growing girth
Henry famously went from a young, athletic figure to an obese old man. At 23, his suit of armour measured 34.7 inches at the waist and 41.7 inches in the chest. By 43, he had a 51-inch waist and a 54.5-inch chest.

The codpiece
As the sheer size of Henry's suits of armour expanded, so too did the codpieces – Henry famously exaggerated the size of his codpieces.

Weight
As you'd expect, armour is not light – one of Henry's foot combat suits weighed over 42.7 kilograms.

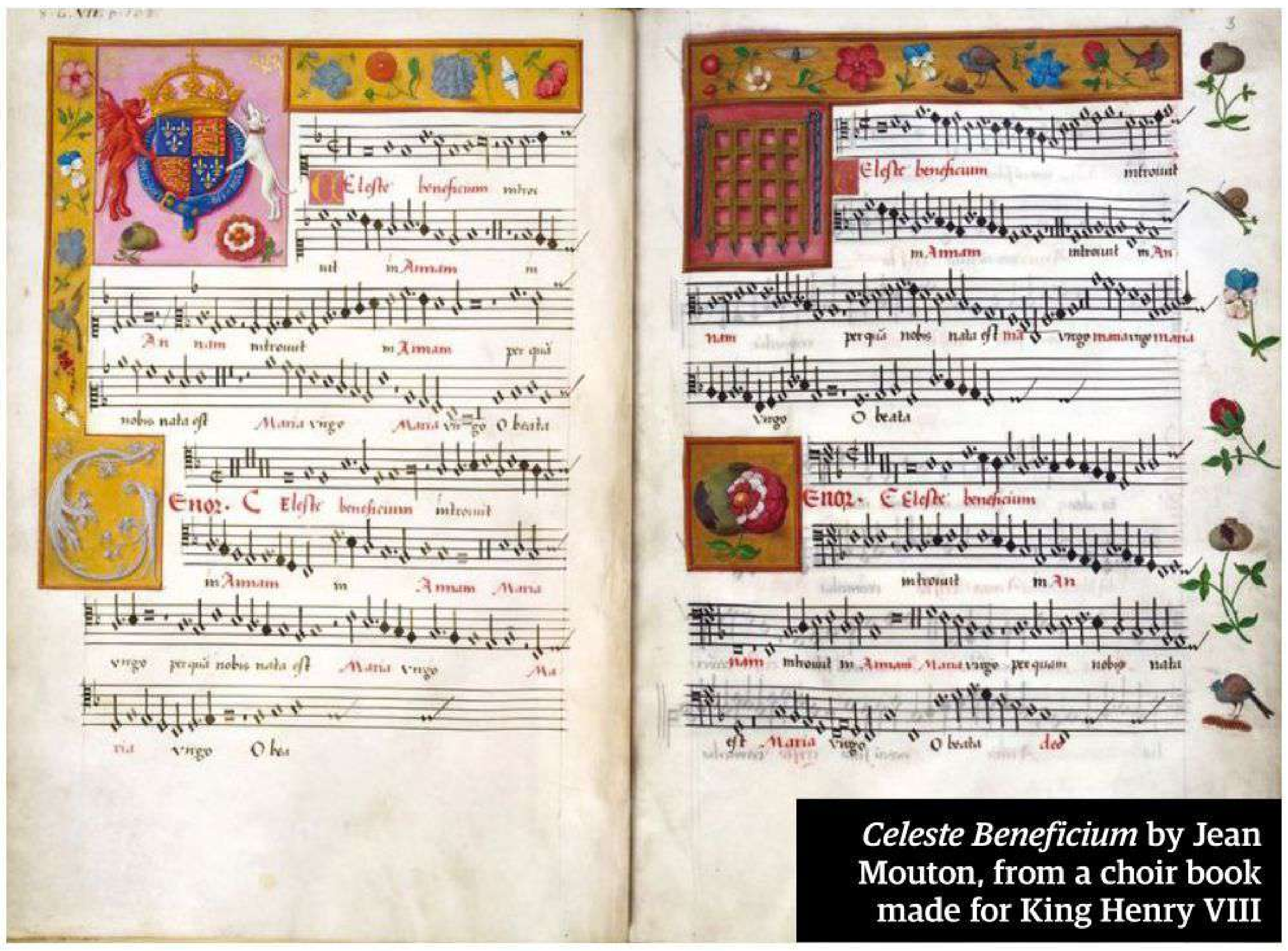
The court of music

A skilled musician, Henry VIII's reign oversaw the flourishing of arts and in particular music

In the summer of 1510, when the court went on progress for the first time, the chronicler, Edward Hall, noted that as well as hunting, archery, dancing, wrestling and jousting, "The royal diversions included playing at the recorders, flute, virginals… setting of songs, making of ballads… The king did set two godly masses, every of them five parts, which were sung oftentimes in his chapel…"

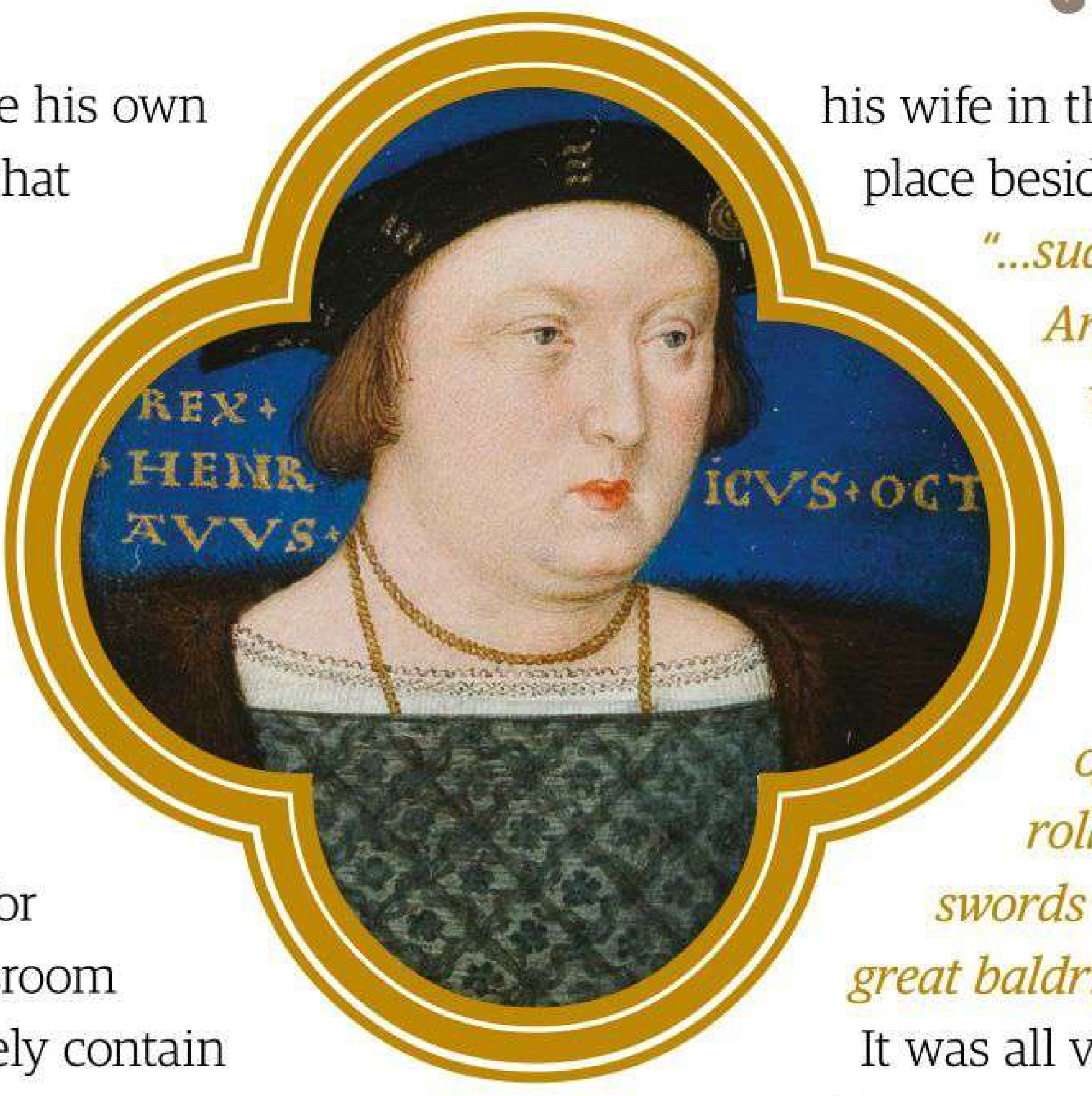
Henry was passionate about music and obviously talented. He could perform on several instruments and had a mellifluous voice. His compositions ranged from love songs to motets and anthems for performance in church. The young Henry was sincerely pious. This largely explains his anguish later in life when he felt that God was punishing him by denying him an heir.

It was Henry who recognised the genius of Robert Fairfax, whom he appointed first gentleman of the Chapel Royal, with responsibilities for training choristers and providing new compositions for the services. Fairfax, the most admired composer of his generation, was one of the founders of the distinctive English choral tradition. For the king, he was not just a valued royal servant and a personal favourite, he was also a status symbol. Royal music was one of the areas in which Henry set out to rival the performances of other courts, and he had no compunction about sending his scouts abroad to poach musicians from other lands. This is one of the few areas of Henry's life that has avoided controversy – except to say that, despite popular belief, Henry VIII did not write the song *Greensleeves*.



***Celeste Beneficium* by Jean Mouton, from a choir book made for King Henry VIII**

VIII was determined to be his own man – and a better man that his manipulative, penny-pinching sire. He lost no time in making it very clear that a new age had dawned. And the message was received with general rejoicing. Writing to Erasmus, William Blount Lord Mountjoy – for many years Henry's classroom companion – could scarcely contain his excitement at this new era:



> *"The heavens laugh, the earth exults, all things are full of milk and honey and of nectar! Avarice is expelled the country. Liberality scatters wealth with bounteous hand. Our king does not desire gold or gems or precious metals, but virtue, glory, immortality."*

Exuberant but true. Private letters, ambassadorial reports and contemporary chronicles all describe a court life such as had not been seen since the reign of Edward IV. Henry spent lavishly on anything that would enhance the splendour of his court, dipping his hand into the treasury left by his father as though it was bottomless. Now there was no one to restrain him, he entered the tournament arena, displaying to the world an image of macho splendour. In other court entertainments, he was not content to be a mere spectator. At one banquet, the king installed his wife in the chair of state and took his place beside her:

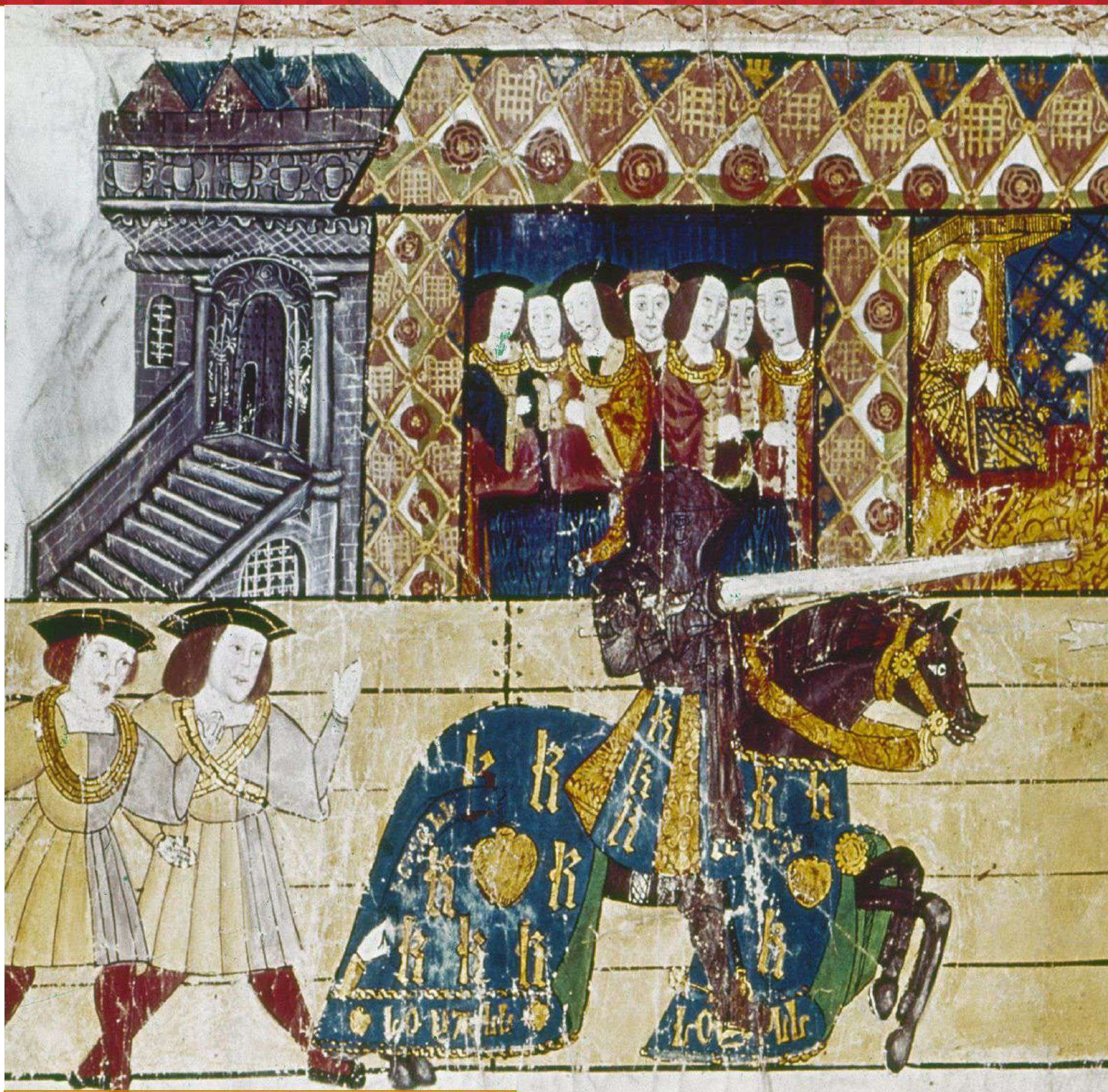
> *"…suddenly the king was gone. And shortly after his grace with the Earl of Essex came in apparelled after Turkey fashion in long robes of gold-embroidered cloth, powdered with gold, hats on their heads of crimson velvet, with great rolls of gold, girded with two swords called scimitars, hanging by great baldrics of gold."*

It was all very glamorous, but was it anything other than the exhibitionism of a spoiled brat who had escaped his reins and was now determined to do his own thing? That would be too harsh a judgement. There was a political dimension to all this display. Internally, the king had to show himself to the great magnates who ruled the shires as their superior in splendour and might, and as the fount of patronage, willing and able to reward loyalty. Externally, he was determined to continue his father's policy of claiming a place at the top table of European royal politics. He was determined to be seen as the equal of the Holy Roman Emperor and the king of France.

In *Le Morte Darthur*, which Henry looked to as second only to the Bible as a fount of truth, Malory described how Arthur was crowned in Rome as an "emperor", "to rule as me likes". This high concept of imperium (absolute rule) had been deliberately fostered by Henry VII and followed naturally from the first Tudor's determination to drown the reality that he was a usurper with the most tenuous of claims to the throne. It was made part of the royal symbolism when, in 1489, the king ordered the striking of a new gold coin, the sovereign, bearing his image wearing, not the traditional open crown, but the closed imperial crown. And the new king believed wholeheartedly in the sacredness of his role. The coronation anointing had set him apart from other mortals, as God's regent in England. It was Jehovah who had called forth the Tudor dynasty to heal the nation's self-inflicted wounds.

But Henry VIII went further. Henry VII was a peacemaker and it is extremely unlikely he would ever have envisaged embroiling himself in costly foreign wars. But for his son, the glory he sought could only be achieved on the battlefield. It was

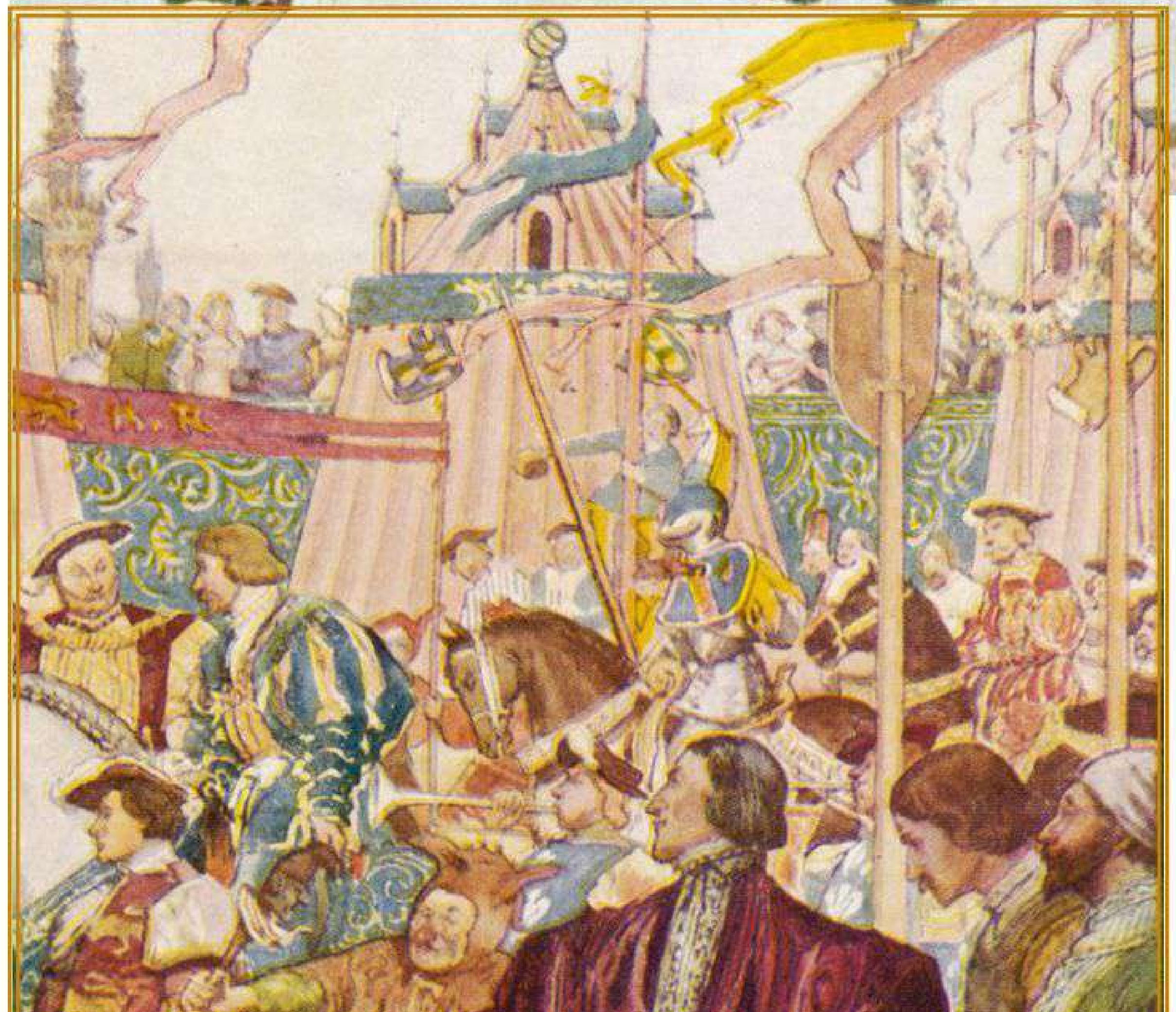
"The English king had little to show for the expenditure of much treasure and hundreds of lives"



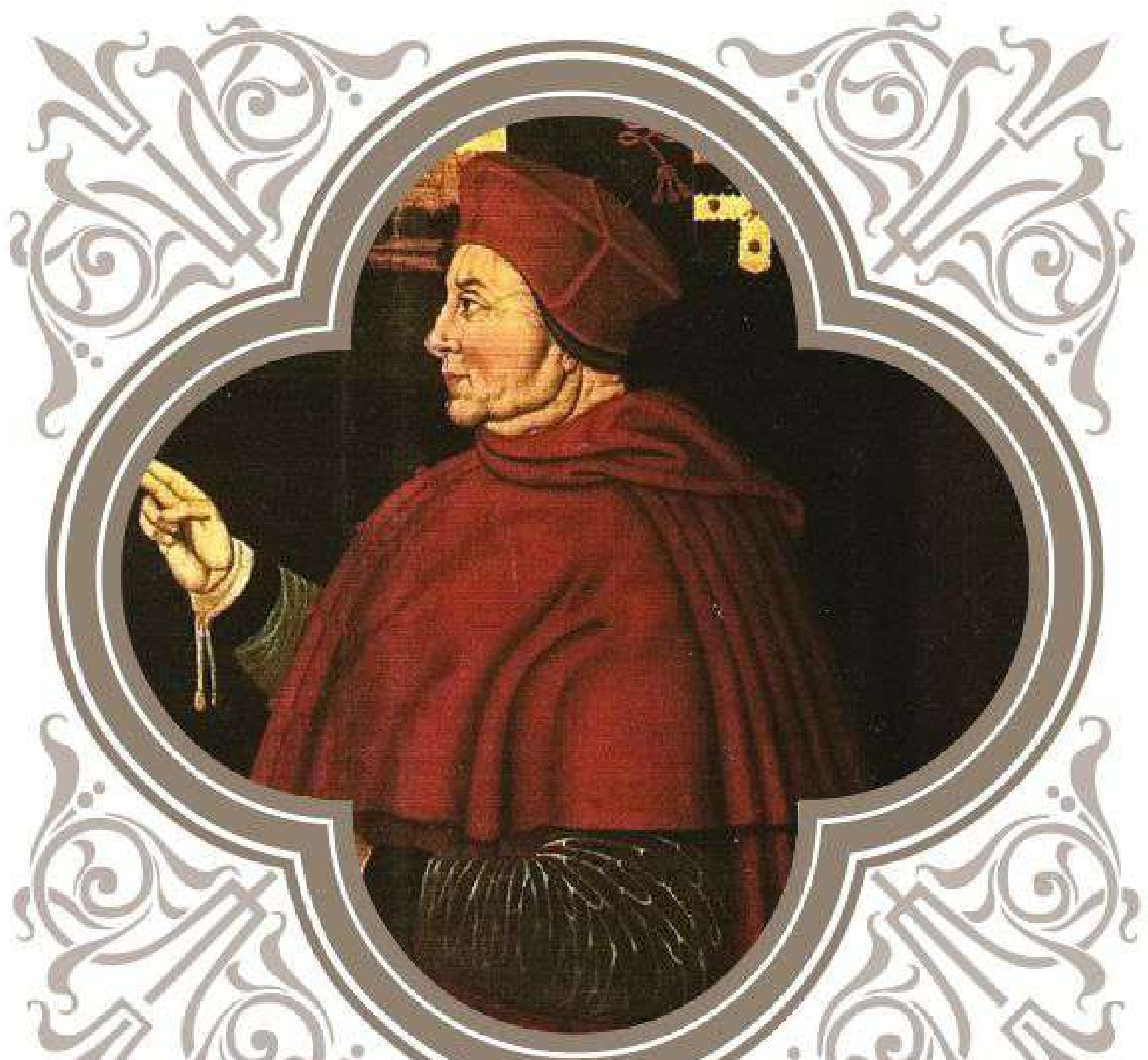
almost 100 years since another of his heroes, Henry V, had trounced the French at Agincourt and he was determined to reassert the ancient claim to the crown of France. To this end, he despatched troops and ships across the Channel in 1512 and 1513.

His ambitions were encouraged by Ferdinand of Spain – for his own ends. He and his successor, Charles I (Emperor Charles V from 1519), were engaged in a long-running contest for the mastery of Europe. A military alliance with England suited them. But when it had achieved what they wanted, they lost no time in making peace with Francis I of France, with little reference to Henry. After these campaigns, the English king had little to show for the expenditure of much treasure and hundreds of lives.

Things were also going badly on the domestic front. Henry needed a male heir to continue the dynasty; it didn't happen. Nor was the failure for want of trying. Catherine conceived in the early days of the marriage but miscarried a daughter.



Henry VIII meets his French conterpart, Francis I in 1520



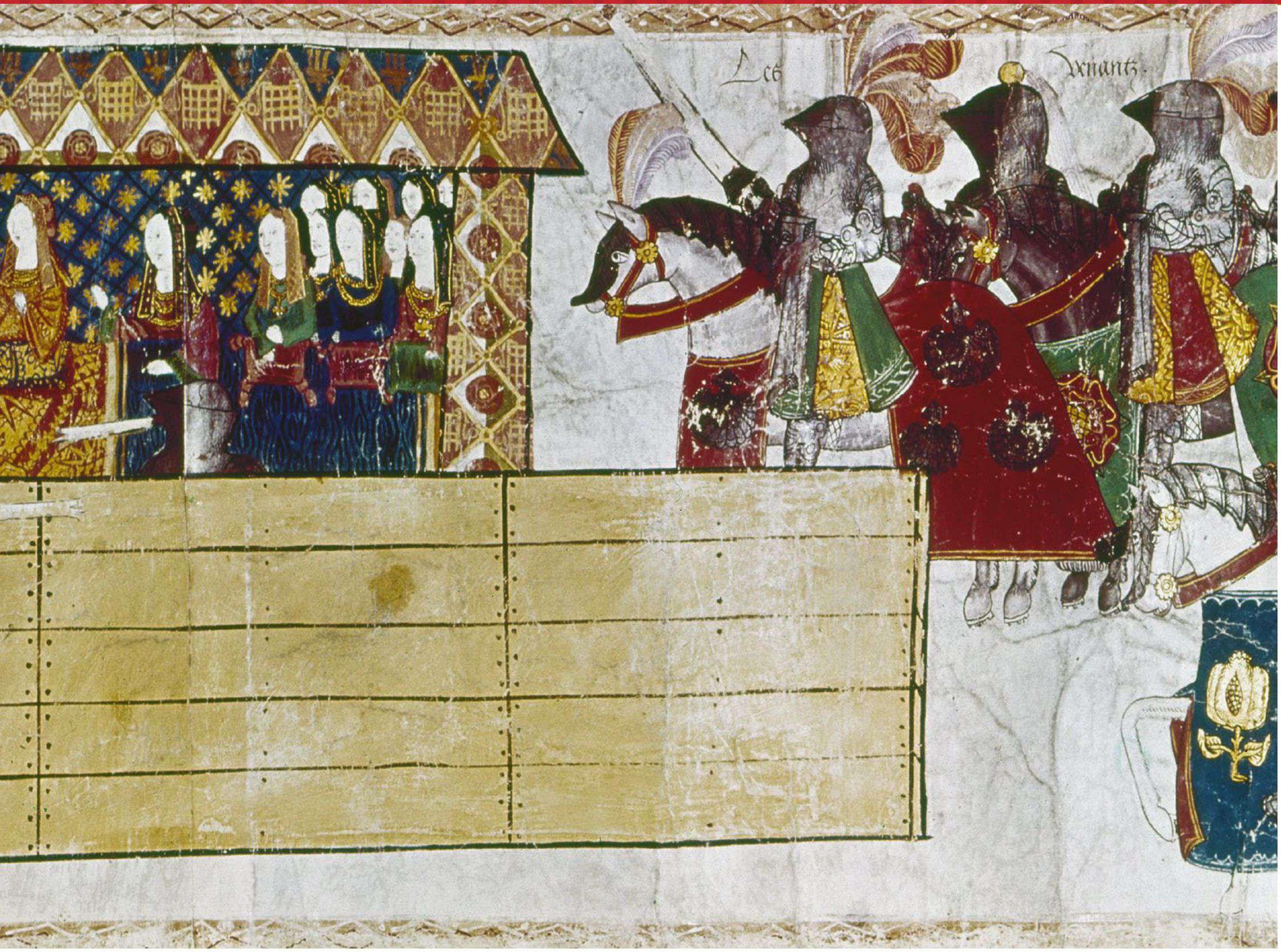
The will of Wolsey

With Henry busy with the glory of monarchy, his right-hand man took charge of business

Henry had learned from his father the importance of relying not on the class that had traditionally provided the top royal advisers – senior ecclesiastics and major territorial magnates – but on talented nobodies raised up by himself and loyal to no one but himself. The first of them was Thomas Wolsey. "Give the king what he wants." This was the simple maxim of the son of an Ipswich butcher who made his way through the corridors of church and academic politics to the inner sanctum of the royal household. Within months of Henry's accession, Wolsey became his almoner. Though technically his role entailed disbursing charity on the king's behalf, Wolsey was more of a general messenger, performing whatever errands Henry needed performed. He thus moved freely between the two centres of power – court and council. He was fully at home in both, and went on to become a cardinal and the king's chief adviser.

Henry allowed his right-hand man a greater degree of freedom than any English minister enjoyed before or since. Wolsey was clever enough not to take advantage of this and become an overmighty subject. He was the perfect bureaucrat – hard-working, a good judge of men and affairs with an eye for detail and a manner that could be, by turns, disarmingly jovial and icily authoritarian.

The historical importance of Wolsey to the Tudor regime lay in his continuing the centralising policies of Henry VII. He filled the 'governmental vacuum' left by the death of the old king. He provided the men, money, ships and armaments that made war possible. He masterminded foreign diplomacy. And, while his master's attention was focused on the glory of monarchy, Wolsey addressed himself to reforms in areas of taxation and justice. The immature Henry VIII originated the policies that shaped the first half of his reign but Wolsey made them work. And when they did not work, who took the blame? Why, Wolsey, of course.



> "Henry and France pledged eternal friendship amid the most lavish displays of courtly splendour"

The royal physician soon diagnosed the queen pregnant again, but he was wrong and Henry was forced to swallow his embarrassment and false optimism. Then, in 1511, Catherine gave birth to a boy. Henry made a pilgrimage to Walsingham to give thanks. On his return, he ordered the most lavish tournament. Then, at less than eight weeks old, the baby prince died. After this, royal spectaculars became less spectacular. Henry never went on pilgrimage again. Catherine suffered more miscarriages in 1514 and 1515. In 1516, she delivered her second child, a girl. By 1520, Henry knew she would not give him a son.

As the months passed, Henry grappled seriously with the question, 'Who is at fault?' He did not blame himself - he never did. It was unthinkable to blame God. If the Almighty saw fit to punish the royal couple, it must be because Catherine had done something wrong. Relations between husband and wife had become so cool that rumours were spreading, as early as 1515, that Henry was looking for an 'out' from the marriage.

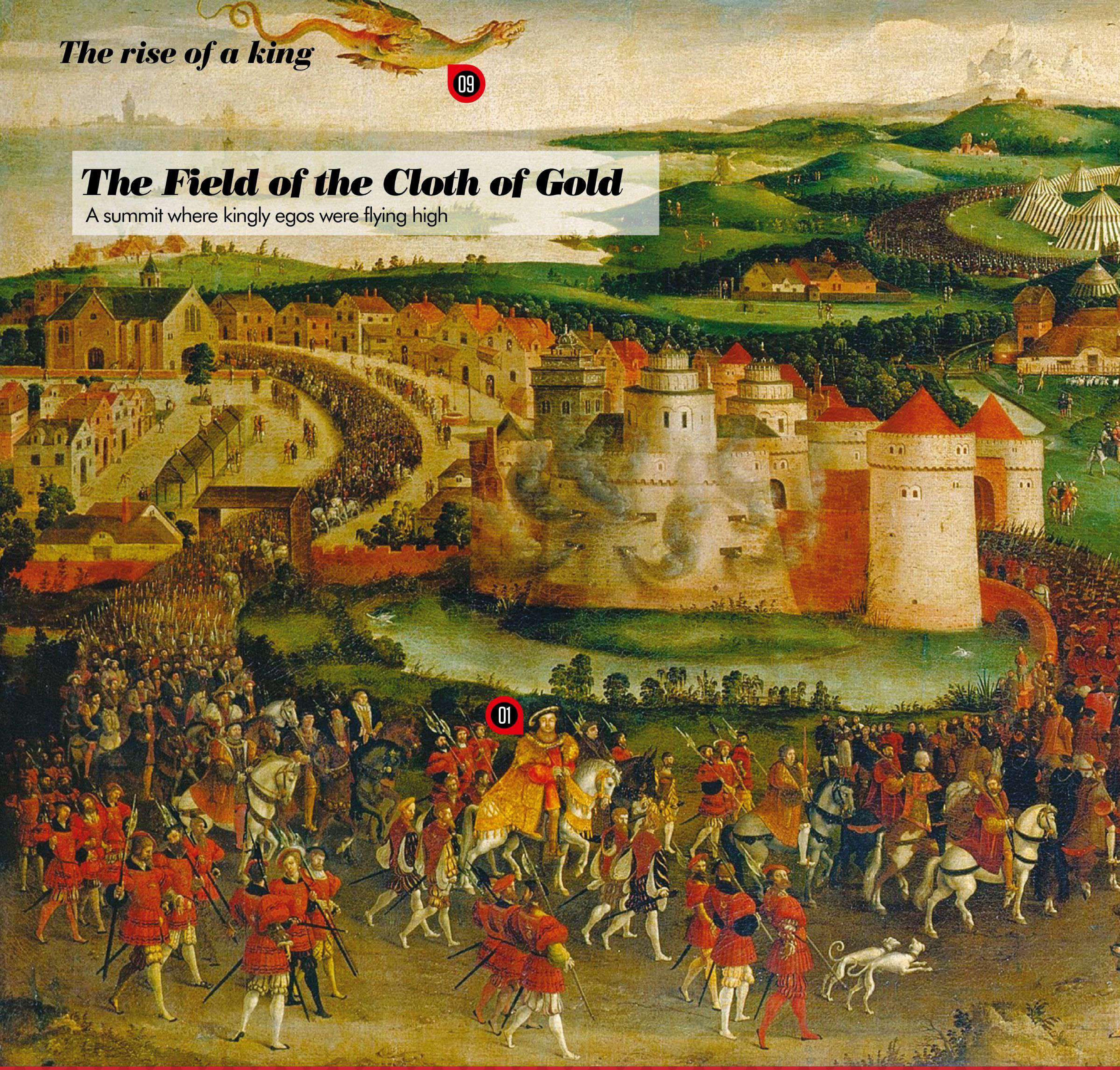
To all outward appearances the king went on his grandiose way. In 1520, he led an enormous cavalcade across the Channel to participate in the biggest diplomatic extravaganza of the age. The Field of Cloth of Gold, an Anglo-French summit at which Henry and France pledged eternal friendship amid the most lavish displays of courtly splendour each could devise. Immediately afterwards, Henry entertained Charles V and broke the promises that he had just made. He had finally learned the art of diplomatic duplicity - yet he failed to profit from it. Support for the emperor completed the drain of government funds. In a little more than a dozen years, Henry emptied the treasury that it had taken his father twice as long to fill. His attempt in 1525 to levy an additional tax turned sour on him. There was such a widespread protest that the project had to be abandoned. A money-grabbing king filling his own coffers at the expense of his people? To Henry's subjects, this had a distinctly familiar ring.

But at least King Henry VII could claim that his own draconian policies were devised with the peace and stability of his people in mind. The style of tyranny that his son, King Henry VIII, was developing was backed by no such vision. The second Tudor king was half way through his reign and the worst was still yet to come. Henry VIII's plundering of the realm would, by contrast, make his father's regime look like that of a benevolent philanthropist.

© Mary Evans; Getty Images; Alamy; Robert Venables

The Field of the Cloth of Gold

A summit where kingly egos were flying high



01 The king and his men

Henry is shown entering the town of Guînes with his entourage, where the English set up camp for the summit. Notable figures in the procession include Sir Thomas Wriothesley, Garter King of Arms, and Cardinal Wolsey beside the king. The figure ahead, carrying the sword of state, is Thomas Grey, the marquess of Dorset.

02 The palace

Seen here in the forefront, the palace was built specifically for the event and was temporary. It had a solid, brickwork foundation but the walls and roof were made from timber and canvas, reducing the overall cost of the building work. The canvas was subsequently painted to make it look like it was made from bricks.

03 Fountains of alcohol

In front of the temporary palace there were two fountains, one for beer and one for wine, for the endless consumption of those attending the summit. Look closely at the foreground and you will see revellers who have doubled over and become sick from drinking too much, while others descend into drunken brawls.

04 Gold dining tent

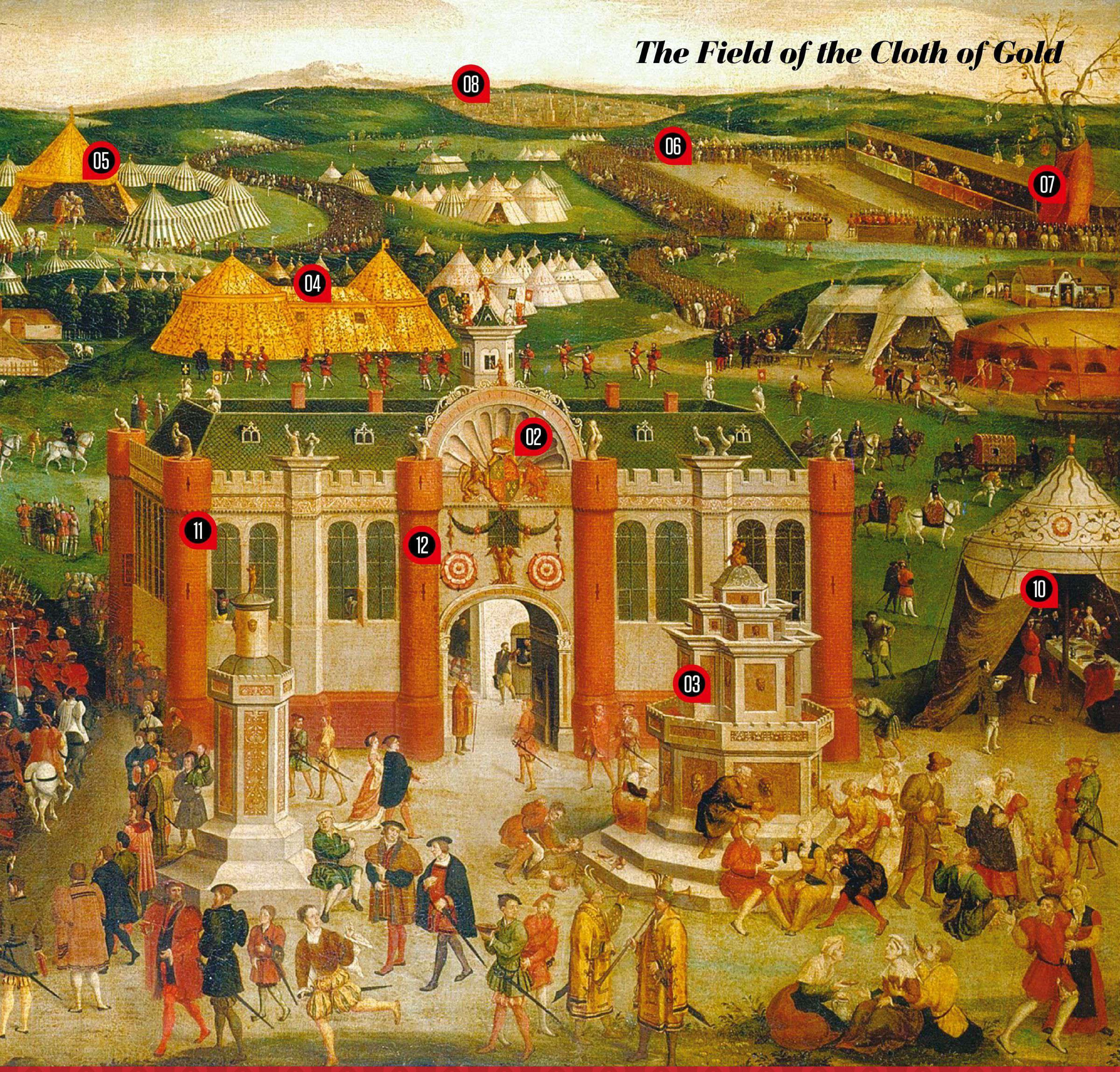
The lavish gold tent depicted in the middle of the painting is the king's golden dining tent, next to which are the ovens and tents where Henry's sumptuous meals were prepared. Enormous quantities of food were consumed at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, where there were thousands of hungry guests in attendance.

05 Henry meets Francis

In the centre of the background lies another luxurious gold tent. Upon closer inspection, you will notice that the meeting between Henry VIII and Francis I is taking place inside. The interior is made up of blue velvet, embroidered with French fleur-de-lys, indicating that this tent actually belongs to Francis.

06 Tournament fields

At the top right of the painting are the tournament fields where the jousting, sword fights and archery took place. In a bid to outdo one another, the kings spared no expense when it came to sports, games, feasts and music — the tournaments lasted for 11 days, although there were interruptions due to bad weather.



07 Tree of Honour

Next to the tournament fields was the Tree of Honour, an artificial tree built for the summit and was covered in gilt. It held shields, which indicated the different competitions of the tournament, and if knights wished to participate then they showed their interest by touching their lances on their desired rival's shields.

08 French camp at Ardres

In the distance is the town of Ardres, where the French were staying during the Field of the Cloth of Gold. This painting, attributed to the British School, was likely commissioned by King Henry to not only commemorate the summit, but to also highlight the lavishness of the English camp compared to the French.

09 Salamander firework

On the penultimate day of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, the kings, their queens and retinues all attended Mass together. Towards the end of the service, a salamander firework was accidentally set off, which reportedly terrified the people of Guînes. It is shown in the top left corner of the painting, flying over the town.

10 Catherine of Aragon

Although England's queen did attend the Field of the Cloth of Gold, she is not depicted alongside Henry as he enters Guînes. Instead, it has been suggested that she is the woman seen in the tent to the far right of the painting here, or she may be in the group behind the tent alongside her ladies-in-waiting.

11 Windows on the palace

Henry had real glass windows installed for his temporary palace created by Flemish glazers and so the French referred to it as a "crystal palace". Glass was expensive, and it is estimated that around £36,000 was spent in total by the English on the summit, which was more than the total annual costs of the royal household.

12 Tudor Rose

The red and white rose, the iconic emblem of the House of Tudor, can be seen as a symbol throughout the painting. Most noticeably, it adorns the front of the temporary palace, as well as being part of the embroidery of the tent on the far right. Henry clearly wanted to make his mark on the spectacular occasion.

Catherine of Aragon Warlady

Queen Catherine was quick to call England's victory over the Scots at Flodden her husband's triumph, but she played no small part in it

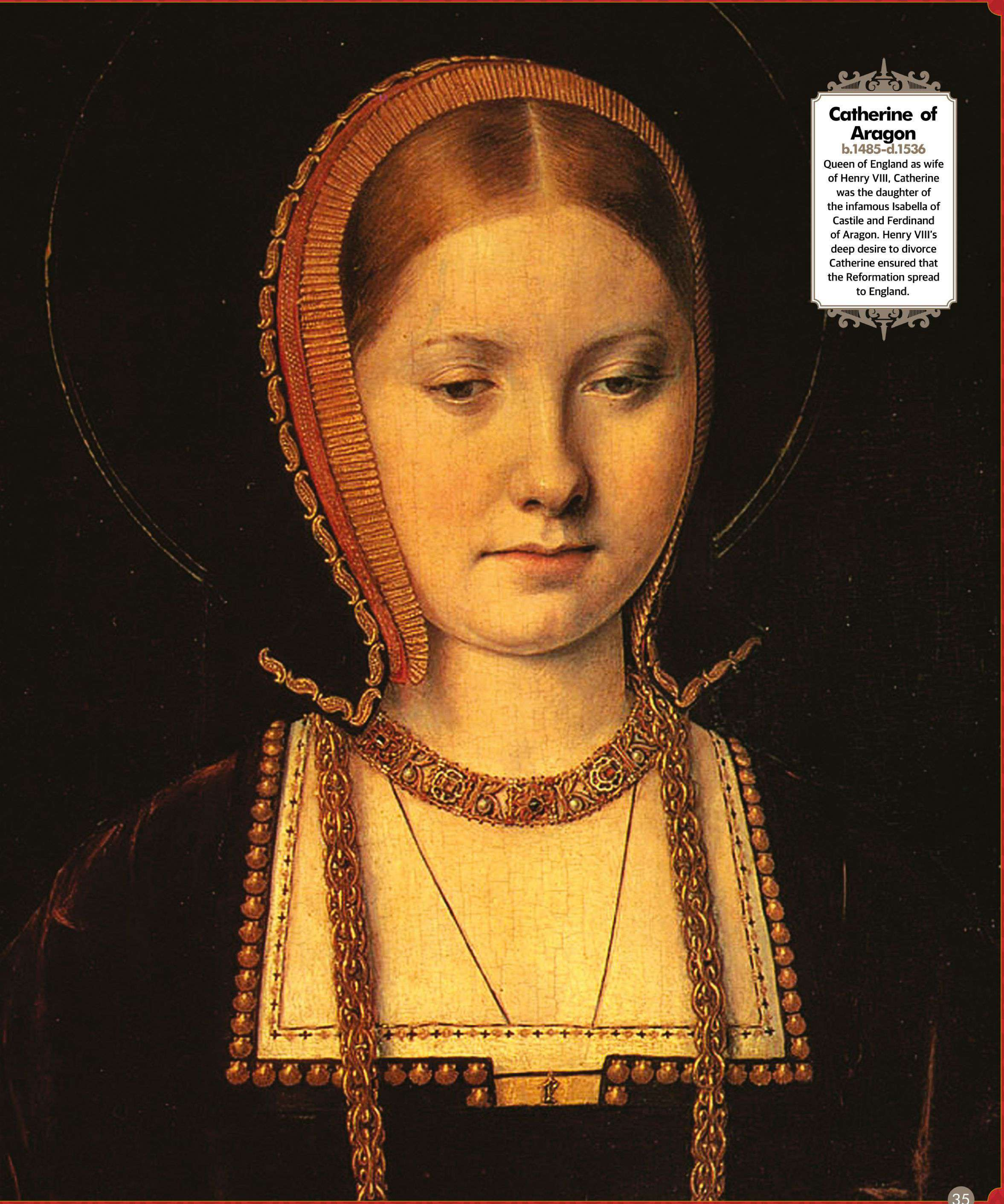
Words DEREK WILSON

If we really want to understand Catherine of Aragon, we must start by understanding her mother, the formidable Isabella of Castile, who combined a fiery national pride, an iron will and an unwavering dedication to the teaching of the Catholic Church. Isabella had to fight for the throne of Castile and, after her marriage to Ferdinand II of Aragon in 1469, she retained the right to reign in her own territory.

The union of the two crowns was the basis of Spain's emergence as a major power in Europe, with access to the political and mercantile life of the Mediterranean world and the thriving economies of the Netherlands, England and the Baltic. More than that, thanks to Isabella's patronage of Christopher Columbus, Spain played a pioneering role in the establishment of European global empires. But the sovereigns' gaze was not only turned outwards; Ferdinand and Isabella were determined that their territory should be entirely Catholic. They brought to a conclusion the long Reconquista, the driving of the Moors from Spain. Granada was an Islamic kingdom in the south of Iberia and it had contracted over 500 years due to pressure from the Christian north. Ferdinand and Isabella completed the conquest in 1492.

Although unable to go into battle herself, Isabella often appeared before her troops in part-armour to encourage and inspire them. She was closely involved in aspects of military life, such as organising field hospitals. Not content with this victory, the joint rulers were intent on a religious purge of their territory. They expelled all Muslims and Jews who would not convert and those who did convert were subjected to rigid interrogation to ensure that their change of allegiance was genuine. This called for a special religious judicial system with extensive powers.

With that, the Spanish Inquisition was born, a frightening fusion of church and state authority that was responsible for the imprisonment and death of thousands of victims before its abolition in the 19th century. Isabella was aware of the power of her religious programme, and she used the



Catherine of Aragon

b.1485-d.1536

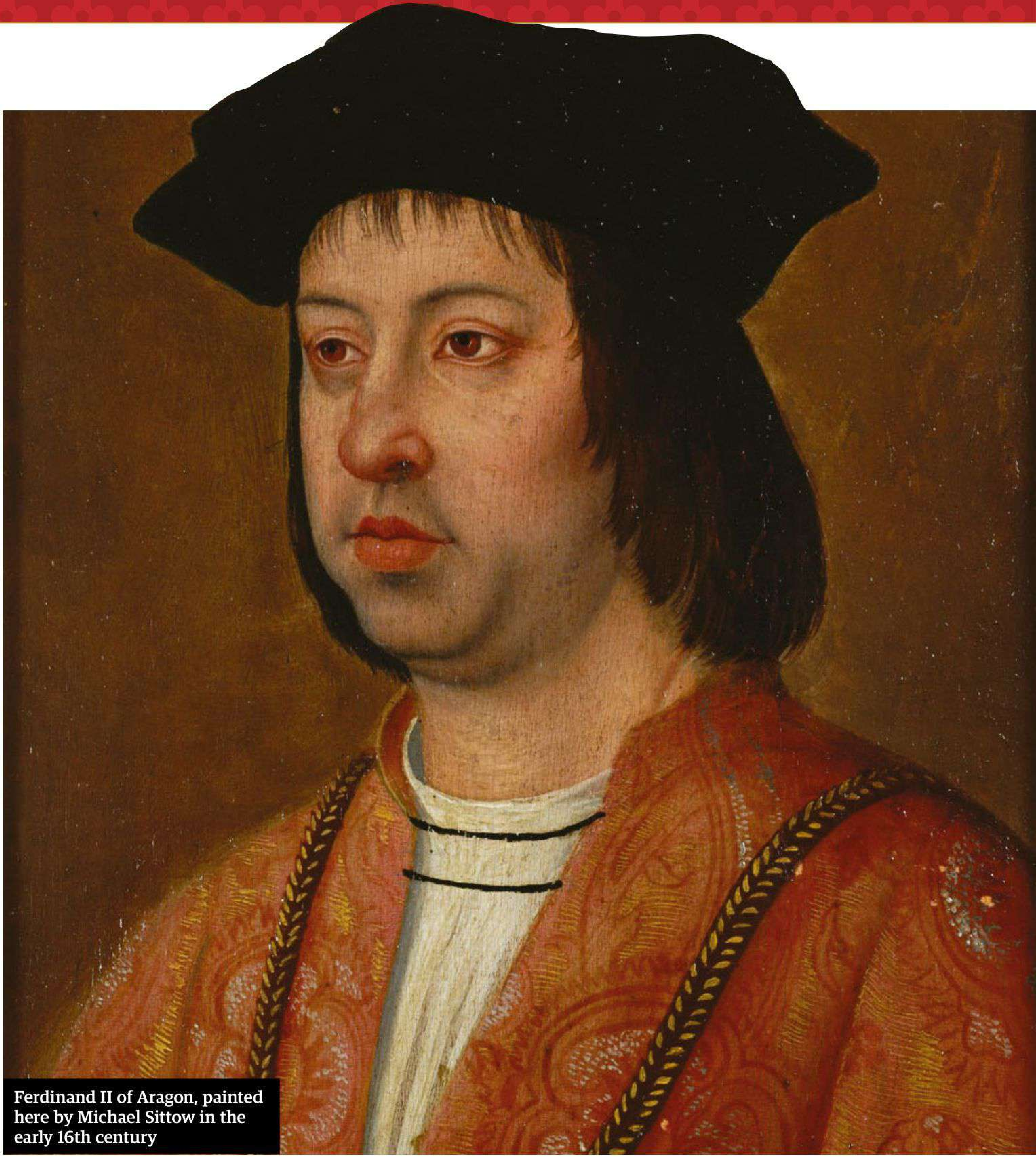
Queen of England as wife of Henry VIII, Catherine was the daughter of the infamous Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon. Henry VIII's deep desire to divorce Catherine ensured that the Reformation spread to England.

imperative of holy war and her role as the agent of God to solidify the support she needed. She created a messianic image of herself that promised to undo the ills of the past and lead Spain on its true, Christian, course.

Catherine was her mother's daughter – intensely loyal to her dynasty and her church. As the younger female child of the rulers of a powerful nation, she was an important pawn in international diplomacy, but she had also been brought up to see herself as having a mission to support the Catholic crusade led by Spain. Her marriage to the heir to the English throne was eagerly sought by both Ferdinand and Henry VII of England.

Henry, whose claim to rule rested only on conquest and who was plagued by Yorkist plots, coveted the cachet given to his dynasty by this impressive union. Ferdinand valued English support against France, which stood in the way of Spain's further expansion. In the autumn of 1501, Catherine arrived in England and was married to Arthur, Prince of Wales. The groom had just passed his 15th birthday. Catherine was nine months older. Just over four months later, she was a widow after Arthur died at Ludlow where he was performing his princely duties.

Catherine spent the next seven years in limbo. Ferdinand and Henry were reluctant to break off the alliance and it was arranged that Catherine should marry the English king's second son, Henry, Duke of York – when he was old enough (he was only nine at the time of his brother's death). It was a wretched time for the lonely girl in a foreign land and her grief was made worse when, at the end of 1504, news arrived that her beloved mother had died. The two kings haggled and argued over her fate. The marriage was on and then off. Catherine was not content to be sidelined. Convention demanded that she should wait patiently upon the decisions of her father and potential father-in-law. That was not Catherine's style.


Ferdinand II of Aragon, painted here by Michael Sittow in the early 16th century

She intervened in diplomacy, going so far as to demand that Ferdinand sack his ambassador, as he counselled abandoning the marriage treaty. Catherine's fate was still undecided when Henry VII died in April 1509. One of the new King's first decisions was to marry his widowed sister-in-law.

It was important to those closest that the marriage should be a success. For Henry, 'success' meant securing the Tudor dynasty and strengthening Anglo-Spanish ties. He was set on regaining England's role as a lead player in European affairs that had been lost during the Wars of the Roses. He shared Ferdinand's understanding of France as his main obstacle.

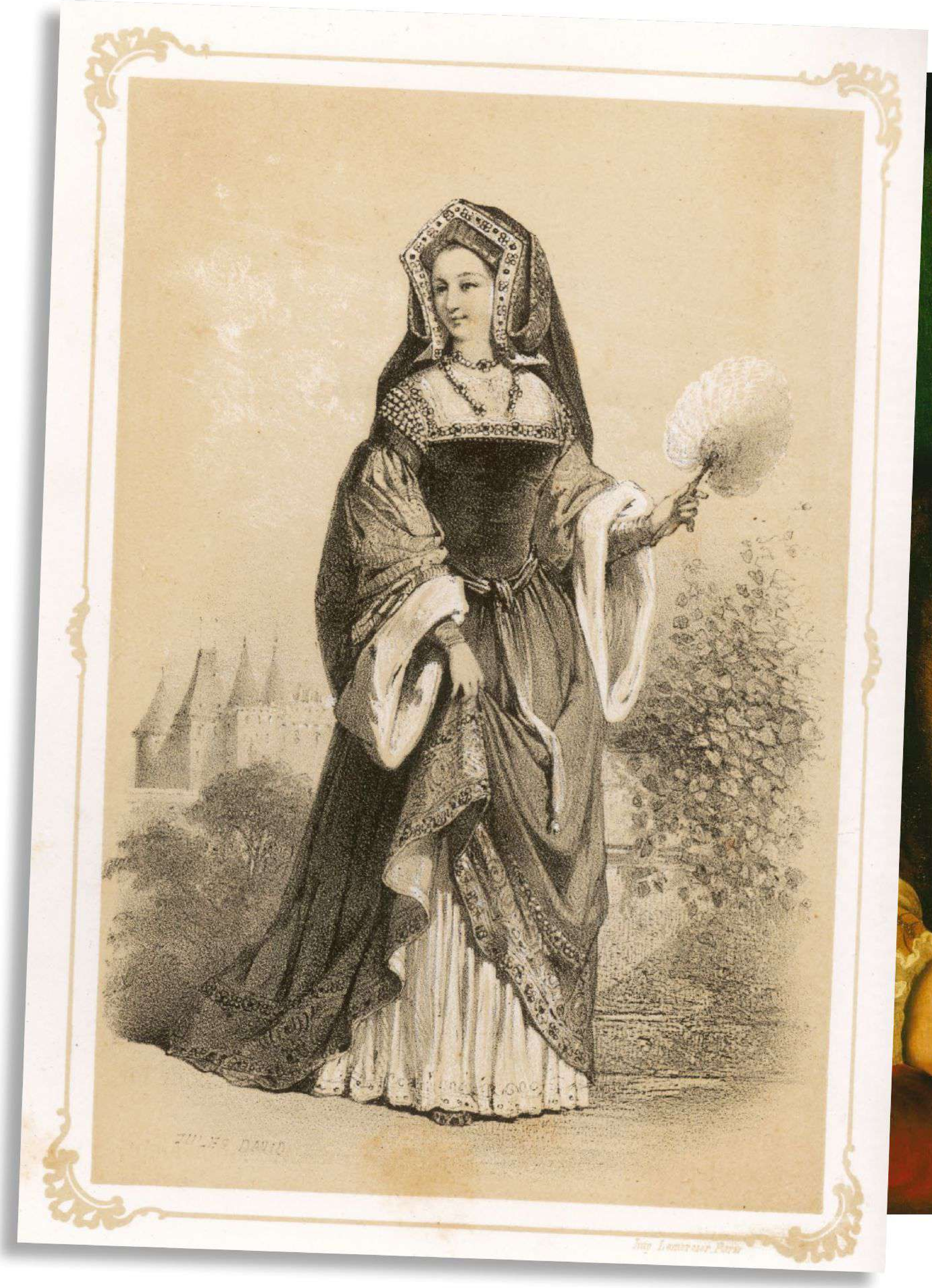
All began well. The lusty, vigorous, athletic, teenage king brushed away the cobwebs of his father's cautious, frugal, pragmatic, financially oppressive policy and was determined to be a ruler in the adventurous, romantic mould of King Arthur and Henry V. From his earliest years, Henry was brought up on those heroic legends.

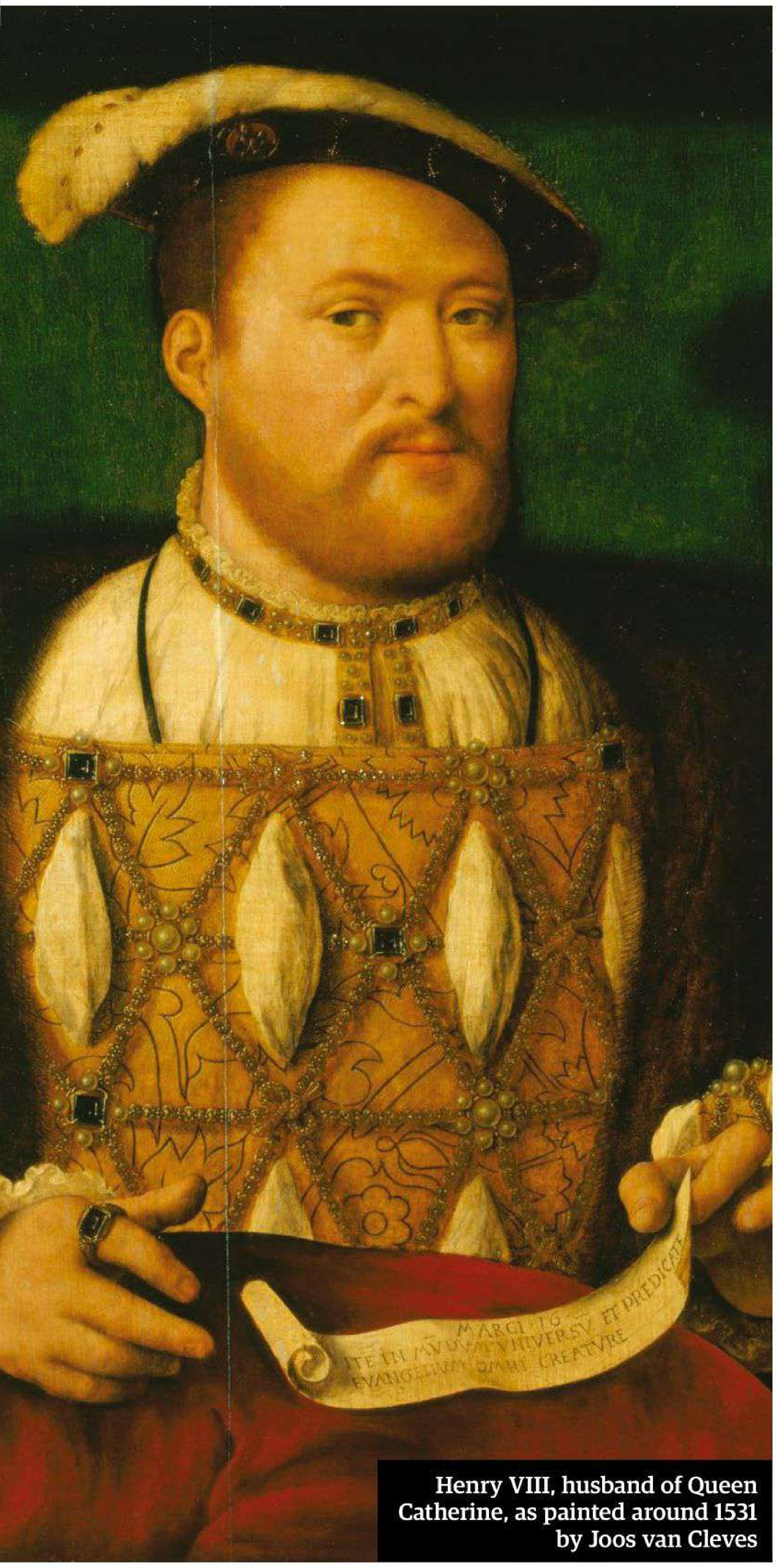
> "Henry was determined to be a ruler in the romantic mould of King Arthur"

Catherine's position could not have changed more dramatically. She reported to her father that life had become one long holiday, a time of banquets, dances and hunting. Thomas More, in a flattering eulogy, set the regime change in wider perspective:

> *"The nobility, long since at the mercy of the dregs of the population... whose title has too long been without meaning, now lifts is head, now rejoices in such a King, and has proper reason for rejoicing. The merchant, heretofore deterred by numerous taxes, now once again ploughs seas grown unfamiliar. Laws, heretofore powerless – even laws put to unjust ends – now happily have regained their proper authority. All are equally happy. All weigh their earlier losses against the advantages to come."*

It took only a few months for sad reality to set in. Catherine was delirious to discover herself pregnant in August 1509 but five months later, she miscarried a daughter. She was overwhelmed with a sense of failure, so much so that she concealed the news from her father for as long as possible. Fortunately, a second child was, by then, on the way. On 1 January 1511, she gave birth to a boy. A delirious Henry really pushed the boat out in celebration. A magnificent international tournament was held at Westminster and the King made a pilgrimage to the shrine at Walsingham. Ten days later the infant Prince was dead. Failure again – and this time more humiliating. It has often




Henry VIII, husband of Queen Catherine, as painted around 1531 by Joos van Cleves

been thought that Henry began to question the validity of his marriage in the 1520s but doubts began to creep in much earlier. In taking Catherine as his wife, Henry had flouted his father's dying wishes, the advice of his council and the rules of holy church. Could it be that the loss of his children signified divine displeasure? For the time being, the King stifled any such misgivings.

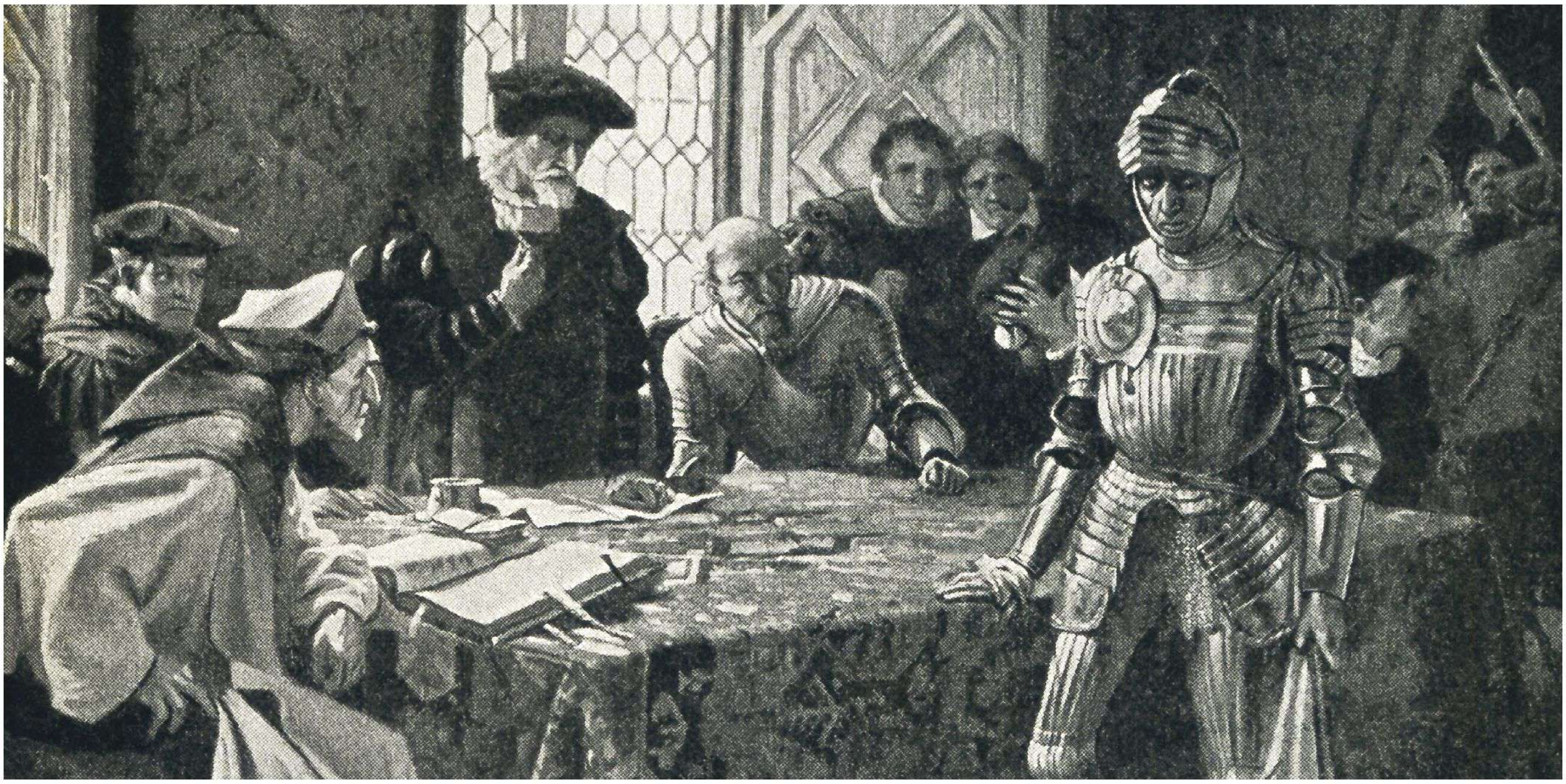
Catherine encouraged him to do so and threw her weight behind diplomatic manoeuvres directed towards Anglo-Spanish war with France. She was more eager than ever to justify her raison d'etre as a political link between Spain and England and worked behind the scenes to disarm the peace party on the council. She was a willing pawn in the game of military diplomacy that was now played out. But it was not a game between equals. Ferdinand, a master of duplicity, had waited long to draw England into his ambitious schemes. Through Catherine, he encouraged Henry's bellicose dreams of regaining land in Aquitaine that had once been annexed to the English crown, while his real intention was to use the English invasion as a diversion to cover his own assault on the Pyrenean kingdom of Navarre.

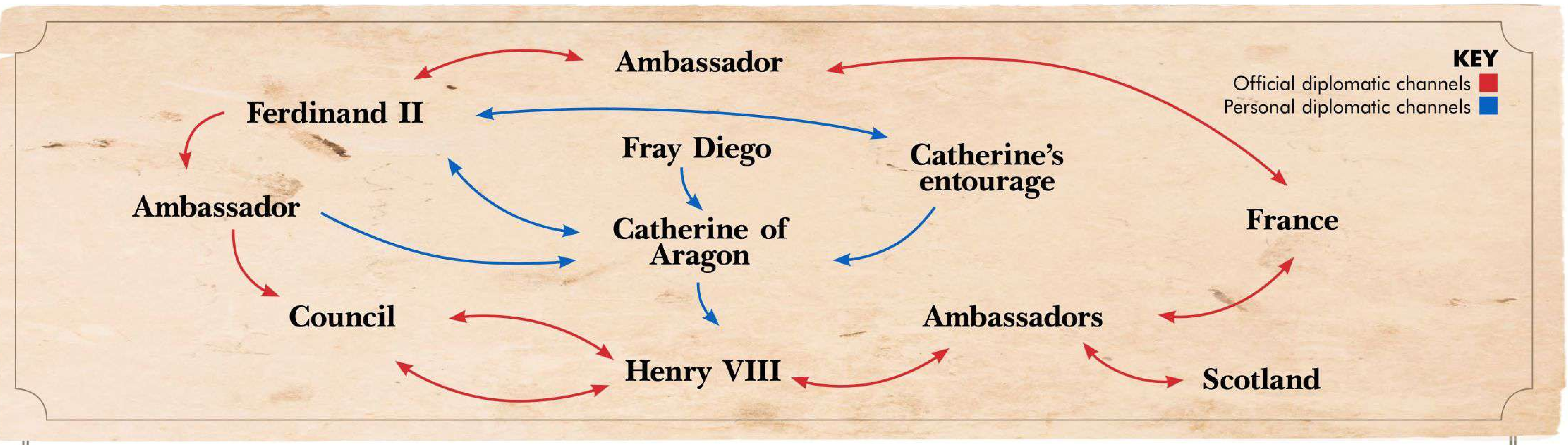
The campaigning of 1512 was remarkable for extravagant bravura and humiliating disaster. Henry doubled the size of his navy. When he heard that King James IV of Scotland had ordered the building of the Michael in France – the biggest warship afloat – he immediately commissioned the Henry Grace à Dieu to outclass it. The glorious game of war was celebrated in jousts and court festivities and when the army eventually embarked at Southampton, he went into raptures over the scene:

"To see the lords and gentlemen so well armed and so richly apparelled in cloths of gold and silver and velvets of sundry colours, pounced and embroidered, and all petty captains in satin and damask of white and green and yeoman in cloth of the same colour, the banners, pennons, standards… fresh and newly painted with sundry beasts and devices, it was a pleasure to behold."

But the troops sent to south-west France were deserted by their Spanish allies and returned with their tails between their legs while naval engagements in the Channel cost many lives and achieved nothing.

Inevitably, relations between the allies were strained but Henry was set on his heroic adventure and Catherine played her discreet part in oiling the wheels of the war machine. She was particularly attached to the navy and,





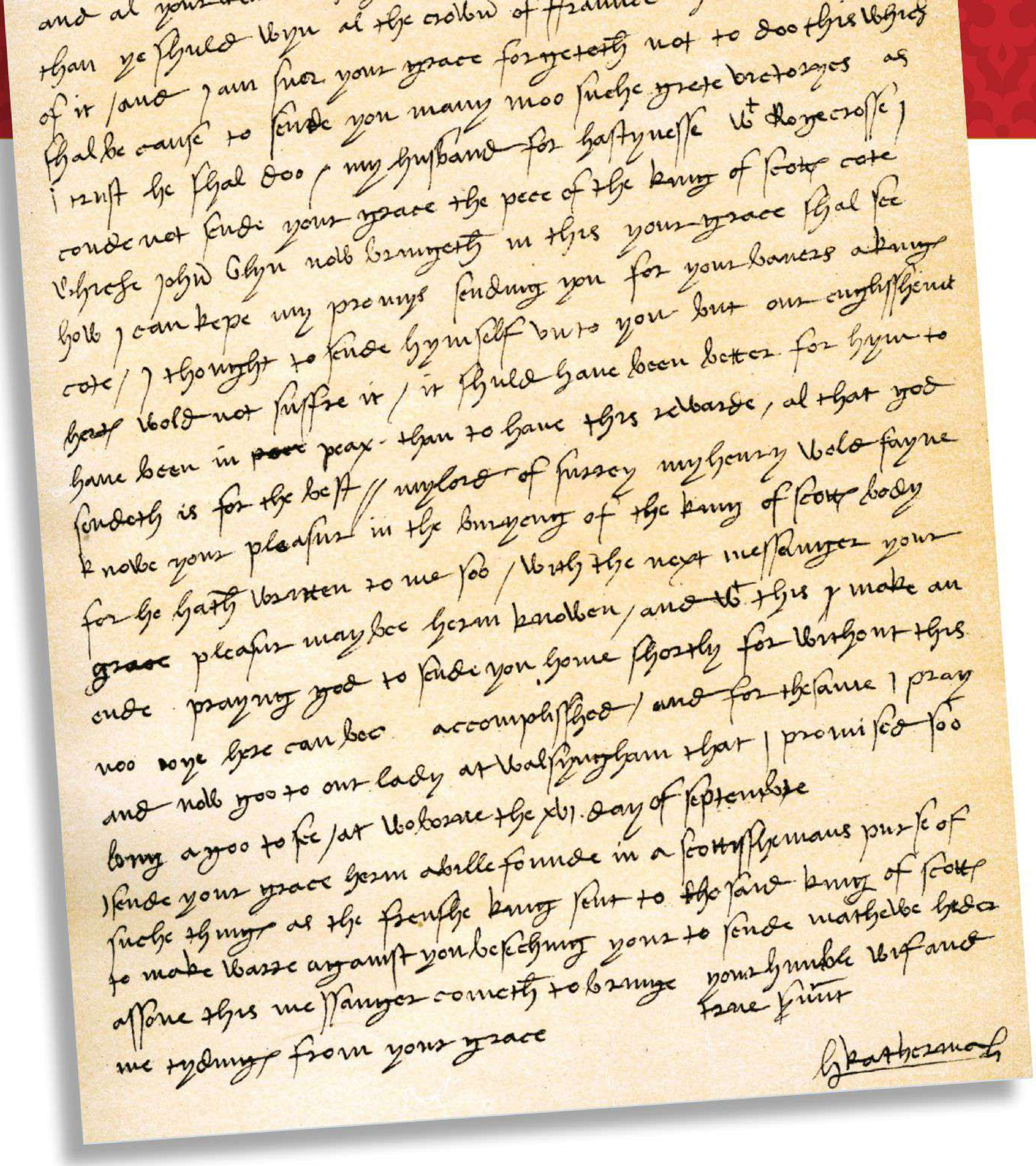
Family diplomacy

When Catherine married Henry VIII she found herself at the centre of a complex diplomatic web comprising many strands which, not infrequently, became tangled. There were the official channels by which monarchs maintained contact through their ambassadors but there was also an inner ring of personal relationships. Catherine, naturally, maintained a correspondence with her father.

Ferdinand's main (perhaps, his only) objective was to manipulate Henry in the interests of Spain's foreign policy objectives and he did not hesitate to bring pressure to bear on his daughter to this end. He worked through his ambassador who, in 1509, was Don Gutur Gomez de Fuensalida, and also through his informants in Catherine's entourage. Members of this latter group used their family connections at the court in Aragon to further their own interests and were in a position to influence the Queen on a daily basis. But the man who had most power over Catherine was her confessor, a Dominican friar by the name of Fray Diego Fernandez. Fuensalida hated him and not without reason. Fray Diego was a forceful, charismatic young man who was a particular hit with the ladies. As Catherine's closest confidant, he came to hold real power over her. On one occasion, Henry VII sent instructions that she was to come to Richmond Palace, Fray Diego forbade her to go. When she demurred, he solemnly demanded, "upon pain of mortal sin you shall not go today." Fuensalida demanded the friar's recall. But it was he who left England in disgrace, thanks to Catherine's advocacy.

In 1509, existing peace treaties with France and Scotland were confirmed on the authority of the council and, much to the annoyance of the new King, Ferdinand's main objective was to undermine England's relationship with France. He pressured Catherine and urged his new ambassador, Luis Caroz, to exert all possible influence to the same end. He even instructed Caroz to bribe Fray Diego with offers of promotion if he would persuade Catherine to tie her husband to Spanish interests. In fact, Henry needed no arm-twisting, since he was resolved on a 'glorious' war with France. As for the reluctant council, they were won over by the perceived threat offered by France to the papacy by its activities in Italy.

As long as Henry believed that he and Ferdinand were bent on the same objectives, Catherine's position was not too difficult but her father's devious dealing made holes in the alliance that she was at pains to patch up. When the 1512 campaign ended in fiasco because Ferdinand failed to provide the promised support to the English force in Guienne, Ferdinand placed the blame on the 'cowardly' English commanders and demanded that Henry punish them. Catherine negotiated this difficulty by her own style of duplicity. She openly agreed with her father and the captains were put on trial. But it was all a farce. None of the 'offenders' suffered seriously. Honour was satisfied and the alliance was saved.



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I trust he shal doo / my husband for hastynesse wt Rogecrosse I
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sendeth is for the best // my lord of surrey my henry wolde fayne
knowe your pleasur in the buryeng of the king of scottes body
for he hath wrytten to me soo / with the next messanger your
grace pleasur may bee herin knowen / and ~~wt~~ this I make an
ende praying god to sende you home shortly for without this
noo joye here can bee accomplisshed / and for the same I pray
and now goo to our lady at walsyngham that I promysed soo
long agoo to see / at Woborne the xvi. day of Septembre
I sende your grace herin a bille founde in a scottisshemans purse of
suche thinges as the frenshe king sent to ~~the~~ said king of scottes
to make warre agaynst you besechyng you to sende mathewe hider
assone this messanger cometh to bringe
me tydinges from your grace

your humble wif and
true servant

Katherina

as her mother had emboldened her soldiers and personally involved herself in administrative detail, so Catherine maintained contact with naval captains. At one point she negotiated with Venice to hire galleys. Nothing came of this, but her back-stairs diplomacy in Rome bore more important fruit. Through Cardinal Bainbridge, Archbishop of York, she brought pressure to bear on Pope Julius II to threaten James IV with excommunication if he intervened in England to help the French. The resulting Anglo-Scottish conflict was a by-product of the convoluted state of European politics.

In response to France overrunning part of north Italy, Julius had formed the Holy League embracing Spain, the Holy Roman Empire and England ostensibly in defence of the Church (though each participant had his own objectives in joining the alliance). James IV was torn between his obligation as a Catholic monarch, his alliance with England (he was married to Henry's sister, Margaret) and his commitment to the traditional Auld Alliance with France. Eventually, it was the latter – plus some pretty inflammatory correspondence with Henry – that made the decision for him.

The main invasion of France was led by Henry in person and was planned for the summer of 1513. On 15 June, the King and Queen set out from Greenwich on their way to Dover, where Henry was to embark with his grand army. Their first halt was at Canterbury where they prayed at the shrine of St Thomas à Becket (which would be demolished by Henry VIII 25 years later). While the King crossed the Channel, he deputed Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey, to deal with the Scottish threat and he left Catherine in overall command in England as Regent and Governor.

At last, Isabella's daughter was in her element. Nature may have deprived her of her role as a royal mother, but she would now show that she was a military champion, inspiring her troops, planning the overall campaign against the Scots and attending to the necessary logistics. She oversaw the despatch of Surry and his army by land and a supporting seaborne force with reinforcements and heavy artillery. The total English contingent numbered around 20,000. Catherine also presided over the council, still not united in enthusiasm for the venture, and sent regular reports to her husband. But that was not all. Careful contingency plans were set in motion in case the Scottish advance was not effectively halted by Howard. A secondary army was raised in the Midlands and a third, under Catherine's personal command, formed a line of defence in the home counties. When her force was mustered, the Queen rode out to deliver a rousing speech, "in imitation of her mother" as one observer reported. Did she, we may wonder, deck herself in part armour like the redoubtable Isabella? In the event, elaborate defensive measures proved unnecessary. On 9 September, Surrey's men won an overwhelming victory in the largest ever Anglo-Scottish confrontation at a place called Flodden Field or Branxton Moor.

> "Henry was set on his heroic adventure and Catherine played her discreet part in oiling the wheels of the war machine"

This encounter has been referred to as the last Medieval battle fought on British soil because of the weaponry used and the rules of chivalry which, in some measure, governed it. The Scots had crossed the border and enjoyed considerable success in early actions. After some unaccountable delay, they had taken up an excellent defensive position on Flodden Hill, some 2,000 metres to the south of the Northumberland village of Branxton, lying four kilometres south east of Coldstream. The terrain was hilly, with high ground and steep-sided valleys running roughly east to west.

In an effort to dislodge the enemy, Howard turned away northwards. The Scots did leave their vantage point but, though the English turned to face them, they succeeded in reaching the next ridge, Branxton Hill. In an exchange of messages via heralds, Suffolk challenged the Scottish King to meet him on level ground and a time and place was appointed for the battle. It was all very honourably arranged. More surprisingly, according to the Scottish chronicler, Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie, as Howard brought his artillery across the River Till, he came in range of the Scottish cannon but James refused to take advantage and ordered his weapons to stay silent. As Pierre Bosquet remarked centuries later about another brave but misguided military decision, "C'était magnifique mais ce n'était pas la guerre" – it was magnificent, but it wasn't war. It may be that James felt he could be generous. He held the initiative and outnumbered the enemy by some 10,000 men.

On 9 September, after an ineffective exchange of cannon fire, the Scots descended the north side of Branxton Hill to meet their adversaries in hand-to-hand battle as the commanders had agreed. At about 4pm, James began with a sortie against the right of the English line and almost broke it, but Howard sent in his reserve forces and the flank held. Along the rest of the line, bloody battle ensued in soggy ground that severely hampered mobility.

Military historians ascribe the English success to the superiority of their weapons. The Scottish infantry relied on the pike, a spear some three or four metres in length. It was a thrusting tool designed for use against both foot and mounted troops and worked best when the enemy could be prevented getting too close. The English employed the bill, developed from an agricultural implement. It was shorter than the pike and had an axe blade as well as a spearhead. As a cut-and-thrust weapon, it was of more use in the sort of close-contact fighting forced on the combatants by sticky ground conditions of Branxton Moor. The Scots had to abandon their pikes and draw their swords. They were literally scythed down in great numbers. The English right and left wings both pressed home their advantage, almost surrounding the enemy.

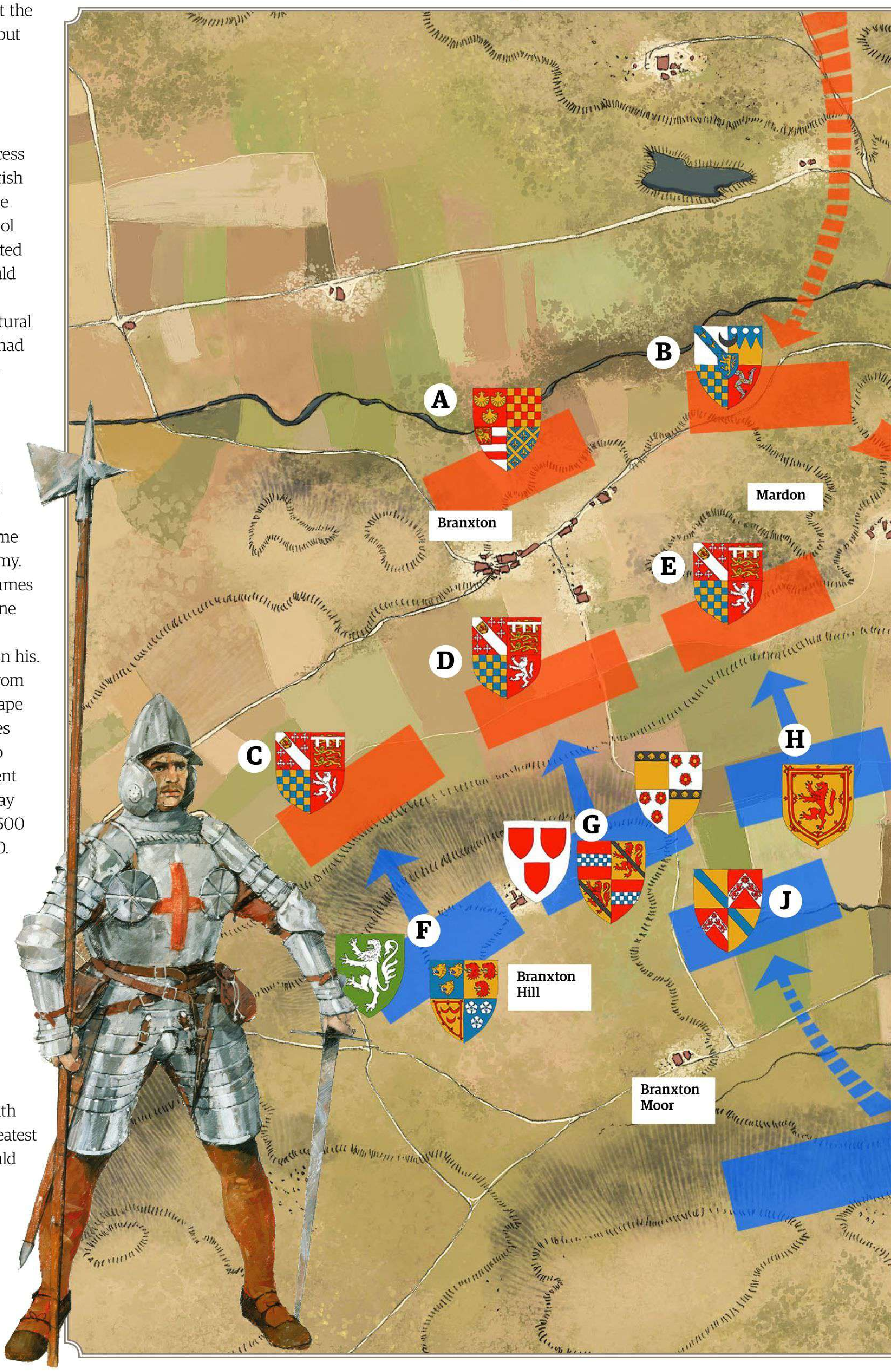
Even so, the day was far from won. King James led a furious charge against the standard borne before the Earl of Surrey. Had he reached the English commander, the day would have been his. In fact, he was cut down only a few metres from his quarry. At that, the Scots struggled to escape the field pursued by the baying victors. Losses in Medieval battles are notoriously difficult to establish, since different records quote different figures. At a conservative estimate, we may say that Howard's army was depleted by some 1,500 men, against Scottish losses of around 10,000. More important politically was the number of nobles and major landowners who perished. The losses of that day were long remembered in folklore.

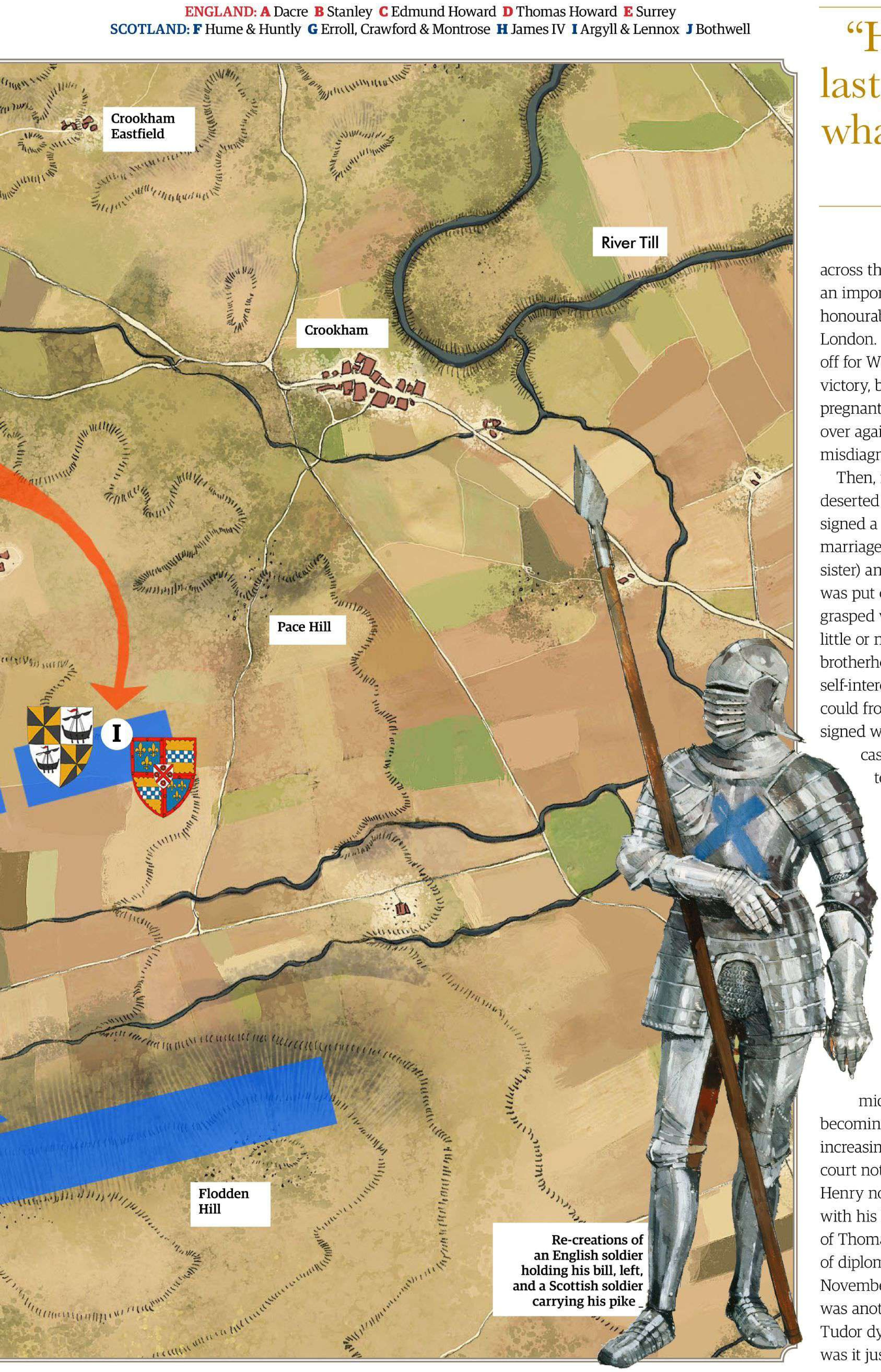
About 300 miles away, en route for the north, Queen Catherine was jubilant at the news. Howard sent her a trophy, part of James's bloodstained surcoat, retrieved from his dead body, and she forwarded it to her husband abroad.

"To my thinking," she wrote, "this battle hath been to your Grace and all your realm the greatest honour that could be, and more than ye should win all the crown of France." The Scottish victory came soon after a successful skirmish at Thérouanne on 16 August.

Henry's army besieging the town saw off a relief force. The event was mockingly referred to as the Battle of the Spurs because of the speed of the French retreat. Henry, too, sent a trophy

Battle of Flodden 9 September 1513




ENGLAND: A Dacre B Stanley C Edmund Howard D Thomas Howard E Surrey
SCOTLAND: F Hume & Huntly G Erroll, Crawford & Montrose H James IV I Argyll & Lennox J Bothwell
Crookham Eastfield
River Till
Crookham
Pace Hill
I
Flodden Hill

Re-creations of an English soldier holding his bill, left, and a Scottish soldier carrying his pike

> "Henry seems, at last, to have grasped what diplomacy was all about"

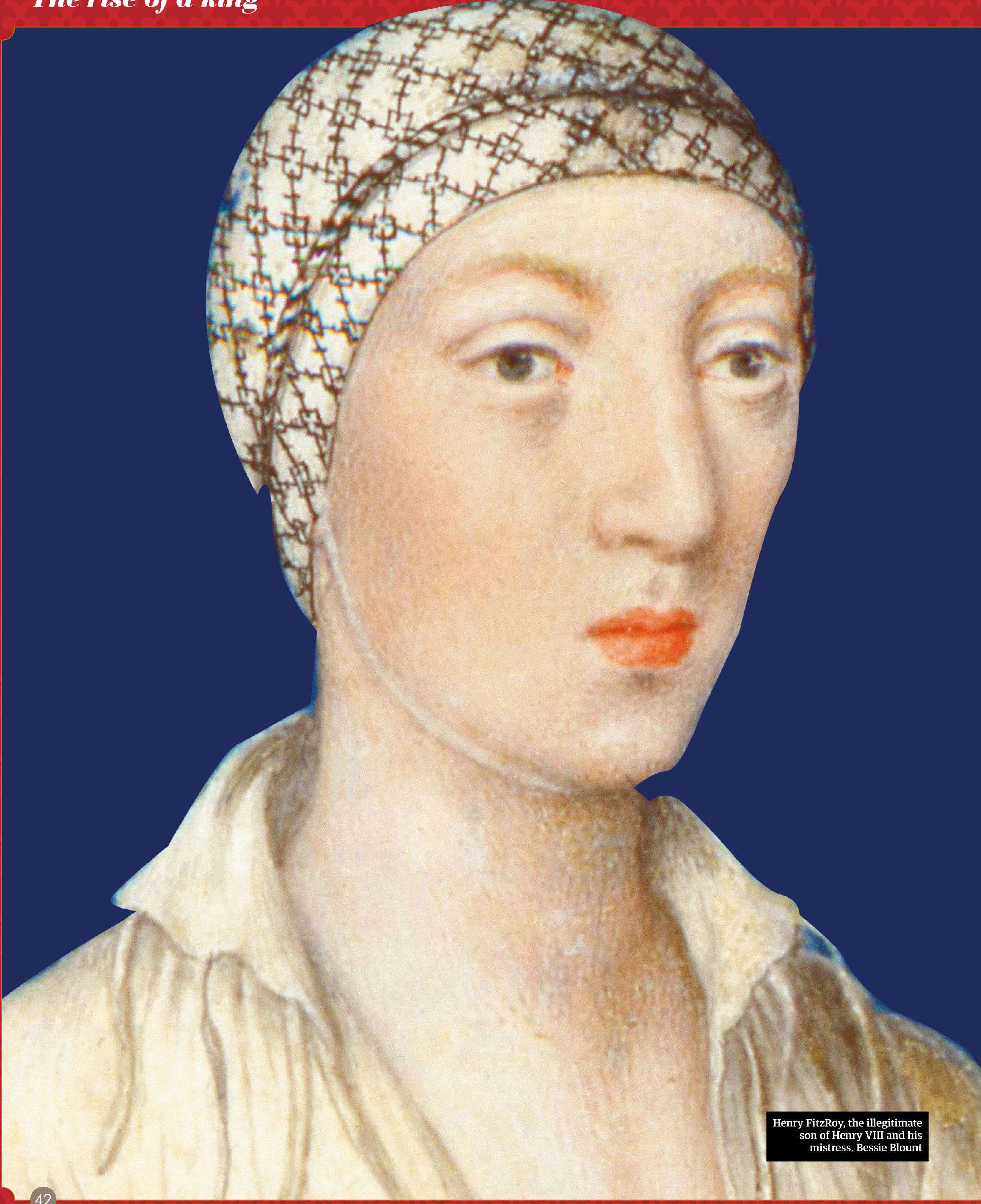
across the Channel – the Duc de Longueville was an important captive and Catherine arranged honourable quarters for him in the Tower of London. Now she disbanded her troops and set off for Walsingham to give thanks, not only for victory, but also for the fact that she was again pregnant. But the sunlit sky was soon clouded over again. Catherine's pregnancy was either a misdiagnosis or ended in a miscarriage.

Then, in the spring of 1514, Henry's allies deserted him. Ferdinand and Emperor Maximilian signed a truce with France. Moreover, a proposed marriage between Princess Mary (the king's sister) and Ferdinand's nephew, Prince Charles, was put on hold. Henry seems, at last, to have grasped what diplomacy was all about. It had little or nothing to do with chivalry, loyalty and brotherhood-in-arms and everything to do with self-interest. He, too, sought to salvage what he could from the recent war. A peace treaty was signed with France that involved a substantial cash payment and the marriage of Mary, not to Charles, but to Louis XII. But, yet again, the diplomatic seesaw elevated Anglo-Spanish relations. The aged Louis died within weeks of his marriage. His place was taken by the young and energetic Francis I, who eagerly resumed hostilities in Italy.

Events forced Henry and Ferdinand to renew their alliance and once again, Catherine conceived. But in the early days of 1516, her father died and shortly afterwards she was safely delivered of a child – a girl.

Where did all this leave Catherine, now middle-aged and dowdy? She was steadily becoming surplus to requirements. She turned increasingly to religion. Frequenters of the royal court noticed that she seldom attended festivities. Henry now had another companion more in tune with his love of extravagant display in the form of Thomas Wolsey, who gradually took charge of diplomacy and the formation of policy. In November, the Queen went into labour. The result was another girl who died within hours. The Tudor dynastic train had run into the buffers – or was it just a matrimonial siding?

© Alamy, Getty, WIKI, Topfoto



Henry FitzRoy, the illegitimate son of Henry VIII and his mistress, Bessie Blount

Bessie and the bastard

As a man with six wives, it's hardly surprising that Henry VIII also had many mistresses. But only one bore him a child who he would recognise as his own

Words ALICEA FRANCIS

Henry VIII was only 17 when he was crowned king of England in June 1509. Today, when we think of this infamous monarch, we often picture him in his later years: a man displaying the effects of a lifetime of overindulgence; sickly, obese and depressed. But the man who processed through Westminster Abbey that hot summer's day bore little resemblance to the man he would become. In his golden coat, velvet robe and ruby collar, Henry's 'Divine Right' looked well-earned, and statesman Thomas More remarked that: "Among a thousand noble companions, the King stands out the tallest, and his strength fits his majestic body. There is fiery power in his eyes, beauty in his face, and the colour of twin roses in his cheeks."

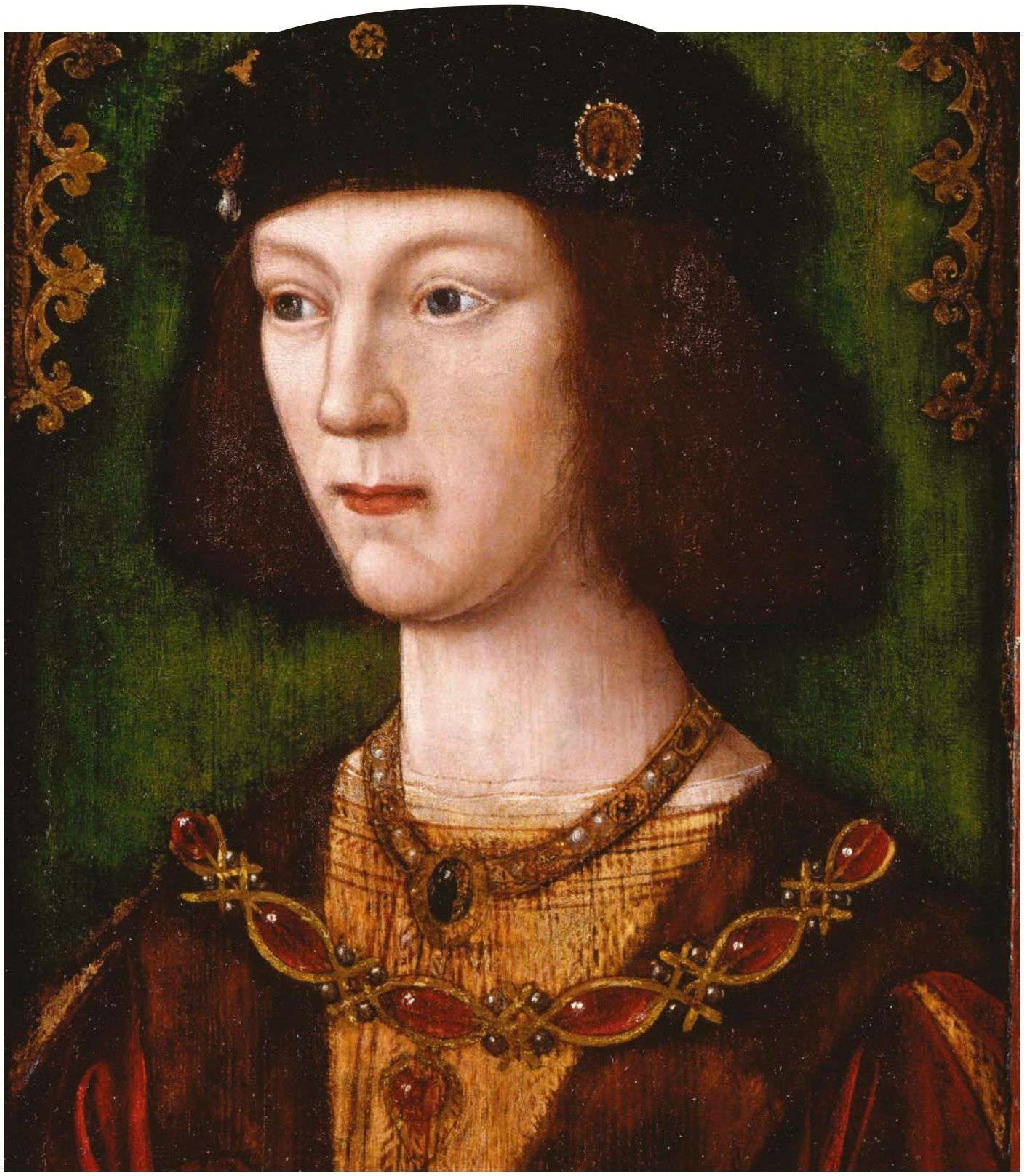
Though it's never sensible to trust a contemporary description of an Early Modern monarch – especially not one written by his own secretary and right-hand man – we do know that Henry was well educated, spoke several languages and was a talented musician. He excelled at sports, jousting and hunting being his preferred pastimes, and was partial to a masquerade ball, where he was always first onto the dance floor. It's fair to say that he was quite the catch.

Sadly for the many single ladies at his court, Henry had married Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon just two weeks before his coronation. Catherine was the widow of his older brother Arthur, who had died of an unknown ailment several years previously. Following his father's death in April 1509, Henry announced it had been the king's final wish for him to marry his brother's widow, and though there were some concerns over the legality of the marriage – particularly among ecclesiastics – Catherine insisted that her marriage to Arthur had never been consummated. She was also the popular choice both among courtiers and the common people; as the daughter of one of Europe's most powerful monarchs, the union would provide a useful alliance. She had been trained for the role of queen consort since birth, and although six years Henry's senior, she was considered attractive, with fair skin and auburn hair. Most importantly, she was slightly plump – a sure sign of fertility.

Catherine would prove to be a devoted wife to the man who had rescued her from a miserable widowhood. Henry, too, seemed smitten at first. In a letter to his father-in-law, he wrote: "My wife and I be in good and perfect love as any two creatures can be." The pair settled happily into court life, enjoying hawking, riding and dancing. And to the king's delight, in August Catherine announced that she was expecting her first child. However, tragedy struck in January 1510, when the queen suffered a miscarriage of her baby girl. It's perhaps no coincidence that just a few months later, the first rumours of a royal affair began to swirl.

The woman concerned was one Lady Anne Stafford. On 28 May 1510, the Spanish ambassador Don Luis Caroz reported:

> *"What lately has happened is that two sisters of the Duke of Buckingham, both married, lived in the palace. The one of them is the favourite of the Queen, and the other, it is said, is much liked by the King, who went after her. [Upon their discovery], the husband of that lady went away, carried her off, and placed her in a convent sixty miles from here, that no one may see her. The King having understood that all this proceeded from the sister, who is the favourite of the Queen, the day after the one was gone, turned the other out of the palace, and her husband with her. Believing that there were other women in the employment of the favourite, that is to say, such as go about the palace insidiously spying out every unwatched moment, in order to tell the Queen [stories], the King would have liked to turn all of them out, only that it has appeared to him too great a scandal. Afterwards, almost all the court knew that the Queen had been vexed with the King, and the King with her, and thus this storm went on between them."*



Anne eventually returned to court, and it is not known whether the affair continued. At New Year in 1513, the king gave her 30 ounces of silver gilt – the third-most expensive present he bestowed that year. But in public, at least, he continued to give the impression of being happily married. Just a few months after her miscarriage, Catherine fell pregnant again and a much-longed-for son, Henry, Duke of Cornwall, was born on 1 January 1511. To mark the occasion, guns were fired from the Tower of London, the city bells were rung, beacons were lit and free wine was distributed among the people. Five days after his birth, the prince was christened at Richmond Palace, and the king requested that the initials 'H' and 'K' be sown on his clothes in honour of his wife. However, on 22 February 1511, after only 52 days of life, the young prince succumbed to illness and died.

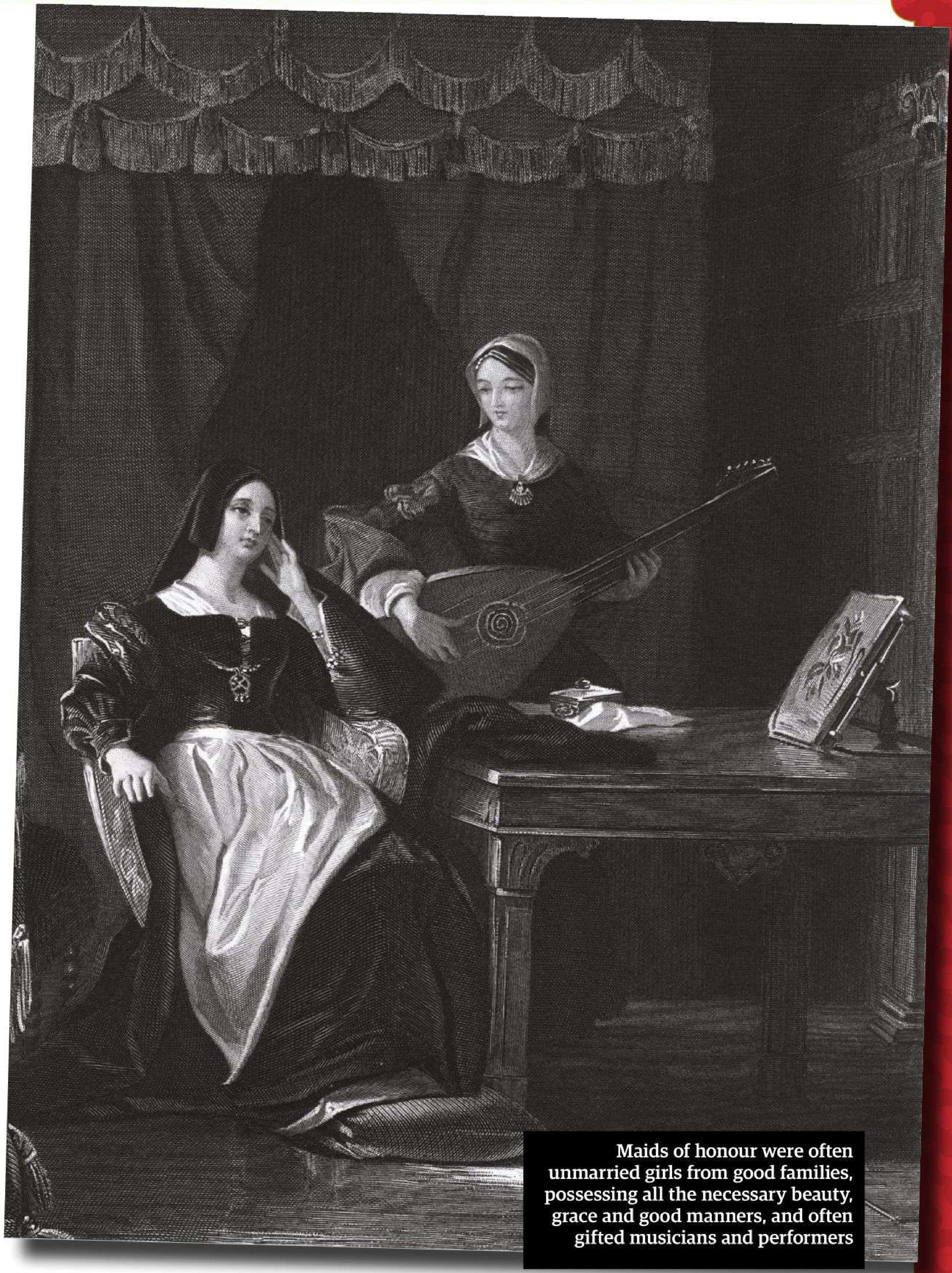
"Bessie seems to have been well read – she owned books both in Latin and English"

Two more years passed without the birth of an heir, and Henry's frustration was becoming greater by the day. If he couldn't prove his manhood in the home, he would have to do it on the battlefield. An invasion of France seemed like the most sensible option. After all, England had been embroiled in conflict with its European neighbour for centuries, and Henry was determined to win back the kingdom of Aquitaine, thus securing from the pope the promised title of 'Most Christian King of France'. In June 1513, he led an invasion and defeated the French army at the Battle of the Spurs. But the rest of the campaign was an embarrassing failure, and he managed to conquer only two significant towns.

Meanwhile, the now-once-again-pregnant Catherine had been left to rule as 'Governor of the Realm', and though the council had never taken orders from a woman before, she coped admirably. Once a week, she sent Henry a letter informing him of matters of state and conveying her ongoing devotion to him, writing: "I am never in rest until I see letters from you". But Catherine soon got the distraction she was looking for.

Not long after Henry VIII departed for France, the Scottish forces saw an opportunity and invaded the north of England. Catherine was forced to step up as high commander, and on 3 September 1513, she ordered Thomas Lovell to raise an army in the midland counties. Here, Catherine rode up north in full armour to address the troops, and made a fine speech before what would become known as the Battle of Flodden Field. Her troops were victorious, and King James IV of Scotland was killed. Triumphant, she sent a

While no portraits survive of Bessie Blount, this memorial brass provides an idea of how she looked



Maids of honour were often unmarried girls from good families, possessing all the necessary beauty, grace and good manners, and often gifted musicians and performers

piece of his bloodied coat across the Channel to her beloved.

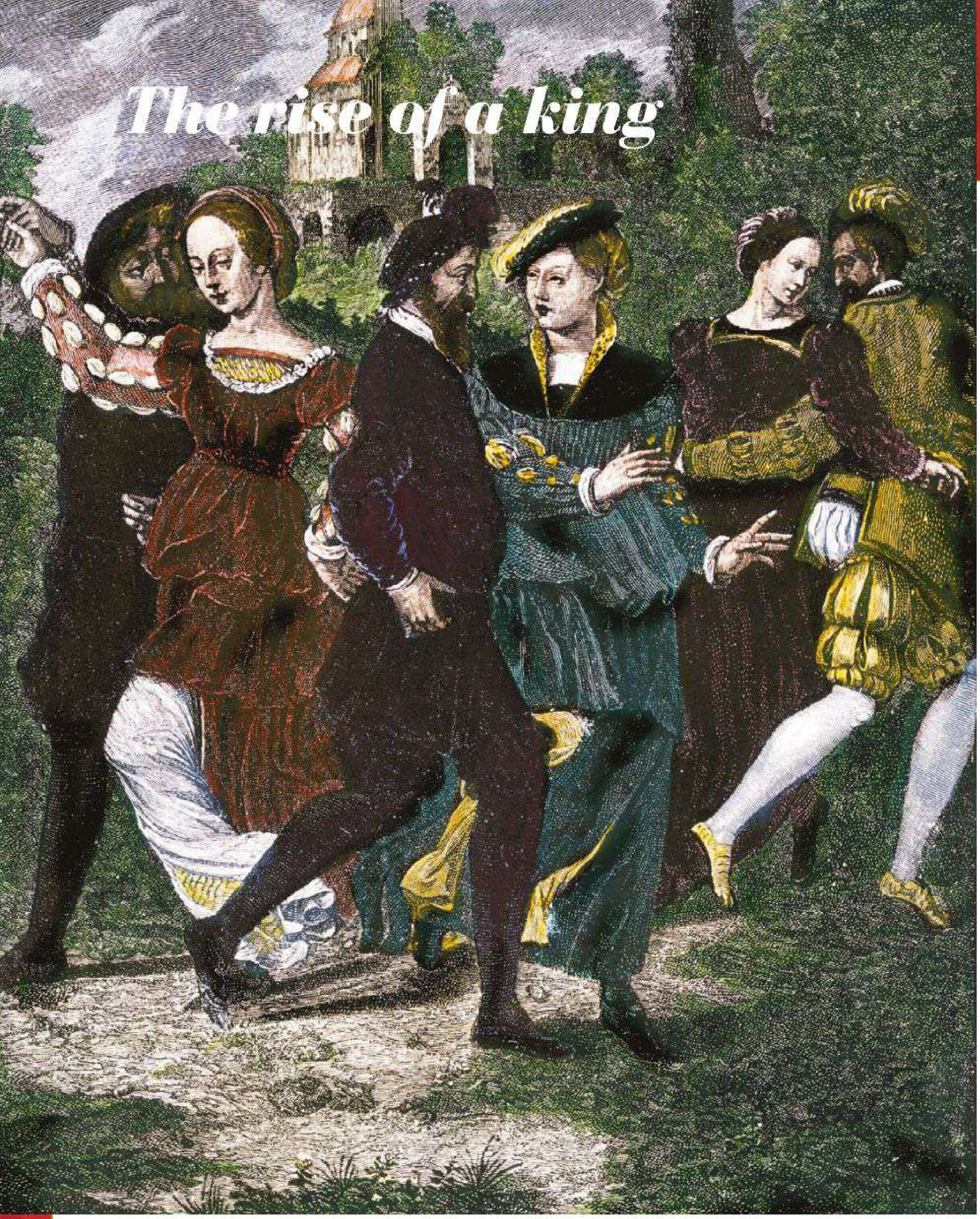
But neither this gesture, nor her weekly letters, could change how Henry felt about his wife, and her victory only served to amplify his own defeat. Catherine's father Ferdinand – the king of Spain – had promised to provide Henry's army with assistance in the French campaign, but instead had used the conflict to further his own gains. While Henry had paid out of his own pocket to support the Spanish, he had received little in return, and the royal coffers were almost empty. King Henry was humiliated, and he blamed Catherine – after all, it had been her who had convinced him to trust her father. Then, to make matters worse, in November she went into labour prematurely and gave birth to a stillborn baby boy.

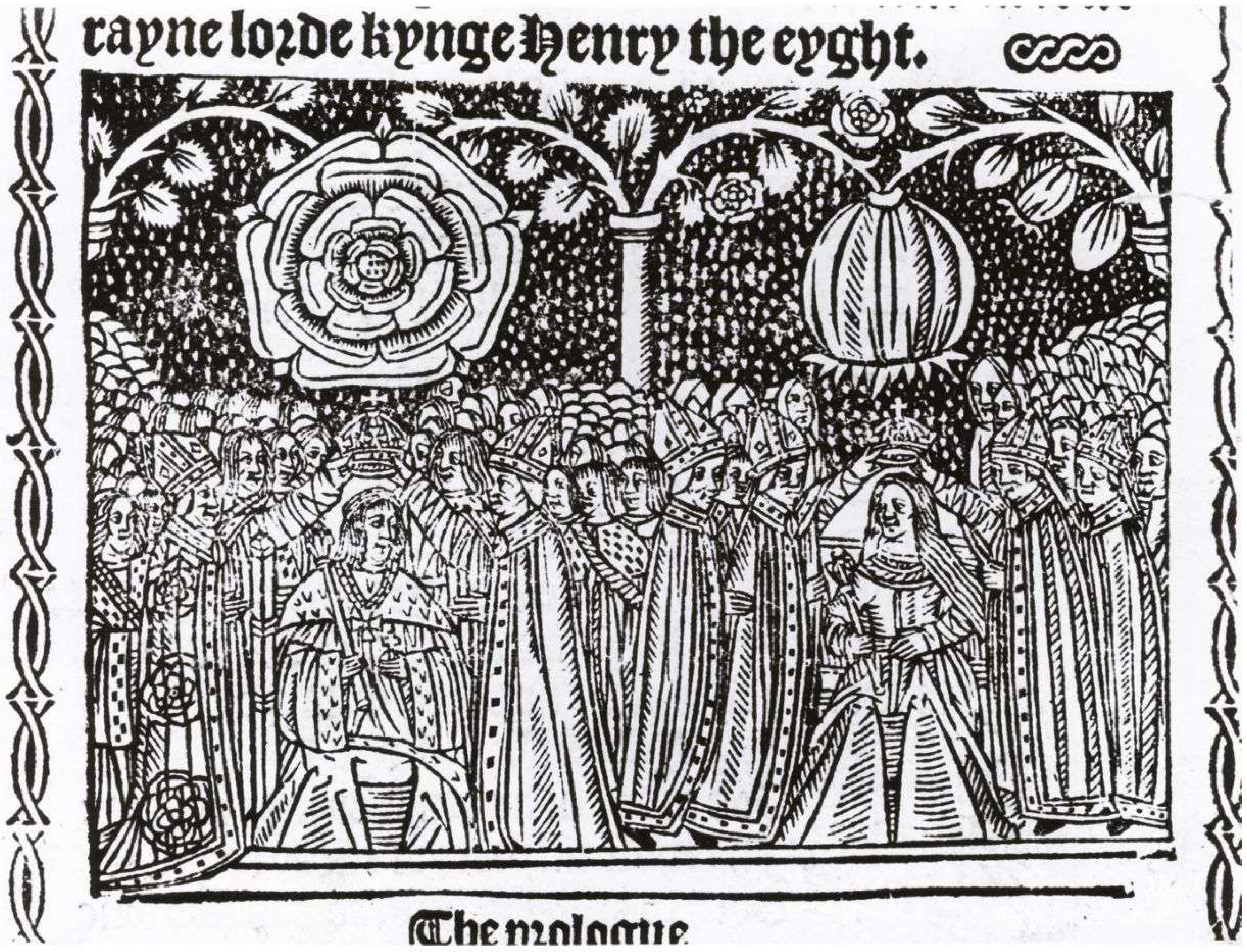
Reeling from the embarrassment, Henry spent much of his time in France with the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian and his sister Margaret. Among Margaret's maids of honour was a Flemish woman named Etiennette. Being far away from his wife and fuelled by the adrenaline of war, the rumours of Henry's infidelity during this time can easily be believed. Some evidence for it lies in a letter that was sent to him by Etiennette the following year, in which she informed him that she was due to marry and reminded him that he had promised her 10,000 crowns as a gift – perhaps in return for the loss of her virtue. One contemporary source stated that in 1514, Henry, "for love of a lady, clad himself and the court in mourning". Etiennette's betrothal could well have been the cause.

In June 1514, Catherine announced her fourth pregnancy. On Henry's suit of armour from that year, now on display in the Tower of London, you can see love knots with 'H' and 'K' decorating the metal, and their initials were also entwined on candlesticks, cups, basins and salt cellars. But it was also that year that Catherine lost much of her political influence to Wolsey. Henry supposedly began boasting about his infidelity in public and was linked to three separate ladies of the court, while the first whisperings of an annulment reverberated around the palace. Catherine's miscarriages and the wrongdoings of King Ferdinand were clearly taking their toll. Almost inevitably, in January 1515, Catherine gave birth to a stillborn boy. The diagnosis was stress.

While Catherine was pregnant, she had been unable to participate in any dancing or festivities, so at Christmas 1514, Henry chose someone else to dance. Tradition dictated that he should ask the next-highest-ranking lady, but instead he asked Elizabeth 'Bessie' Blount – one of Catherine's maids of honour. Lord Herbert of Cherbury described her as being "eloquent, gracious and beautiful" and "was thought, for her rare ornaments of nature and education, to be the beauty and mistress-piece of her time". She was, however, only around 14 years old. In an age where poor diet delayed the onset of puberty, this was young, but not too young to have a relationship with a man.

Bessie had been born in Kinlet, Shropshire circa 1500, the eldest daughter of 11 children born to Sir




rayne lorde kynge Henry the eyght.
The prologue

John Blount and his wife Katherine, whose father had fought for Henry VII at the Battle of Bosworth. Though members of the gentry, her family was not aristocratic, and with so many brothers, Bessie was unlikely to receive much inheritance. She knew, therefore, that she would have to marry into wealth to sustain herself in later life. From a young age, Bessie's mother taught her to write as well as needlework, dancing and singing – skills she would need to secure herself a place at court and improve her chances of wooing an eligible bachelor.

There are two surviving depictions that could possibly be of Bessie – one on her parents' tomb, which shows a girl with downturned eyes and a serene expression; and one on a funeral brass, in which the model wears a fashionable French hood. A portrait of her brother George tells us that he had fair skin, blonde hair and blue eyes. If these were traits that Bessie shared, she would have been considered the epitome of Tudor beauty.

Her family's involvement in the royal court began when Prince Arthur and a young Catherine took up residence in Ludlow Castle, Shropshire in 1501. Arthur died the following year, and both Bessie's grandfather and great-grandfather played roles at his funeral. She was probably also present herself. Bessie's father was appointed esquire of the body at Henry VII's funeral seven years later and by the time of Henry VIII's coronation, he had been appointed one of the King's Spears, acting in both a ceremonial and protective role. However, it was probably William Blount, Lord of Mountjoy – a distant kinsman of the Blounts of Kinlet, who had been a trustee of the marriage settlement between Bessie's parents – who secured her a place at court as maid of honour to Catherine of Aragon. He had been appointed the queen's chamberlain in May 1512, and sought to advance the Blount family where he could.

On 8 May 1513, court records show that Bessie received 100 shillings for the previous year's wages – half that of maid of honour, suggesting that she began her career in a minor position. On 29 September, she was included in a list of "years wages due at Michaelmas", receiving 200 shillings. This means that she must have been promoted to the ranks of maid of honour by at least 29 September 1512, when she was around 12 years old.

Her role was to "ensure the quiet rest and comfort of [her] mistress, and the preservation of her health". As Catherine's attendant, she would have spent her time sewing and completing other menial tasks, such as serving meals, or at prayer. She would also have been expected to continue her education. Bessie seems to have been well read – she owned poetry books both in Latin and English. Even though much of her day would have been spent at work, she would have also been invited to go hunting or hawking and attend masquerades and feasts.

Bessie excelled in the pageantry of court. One contemporary wrote that her gift in singing and dancing helped her to capture the king's heart. The first evidence of Bessie being on Henry's radar came in October 1514, when Charles Brandon, Duke

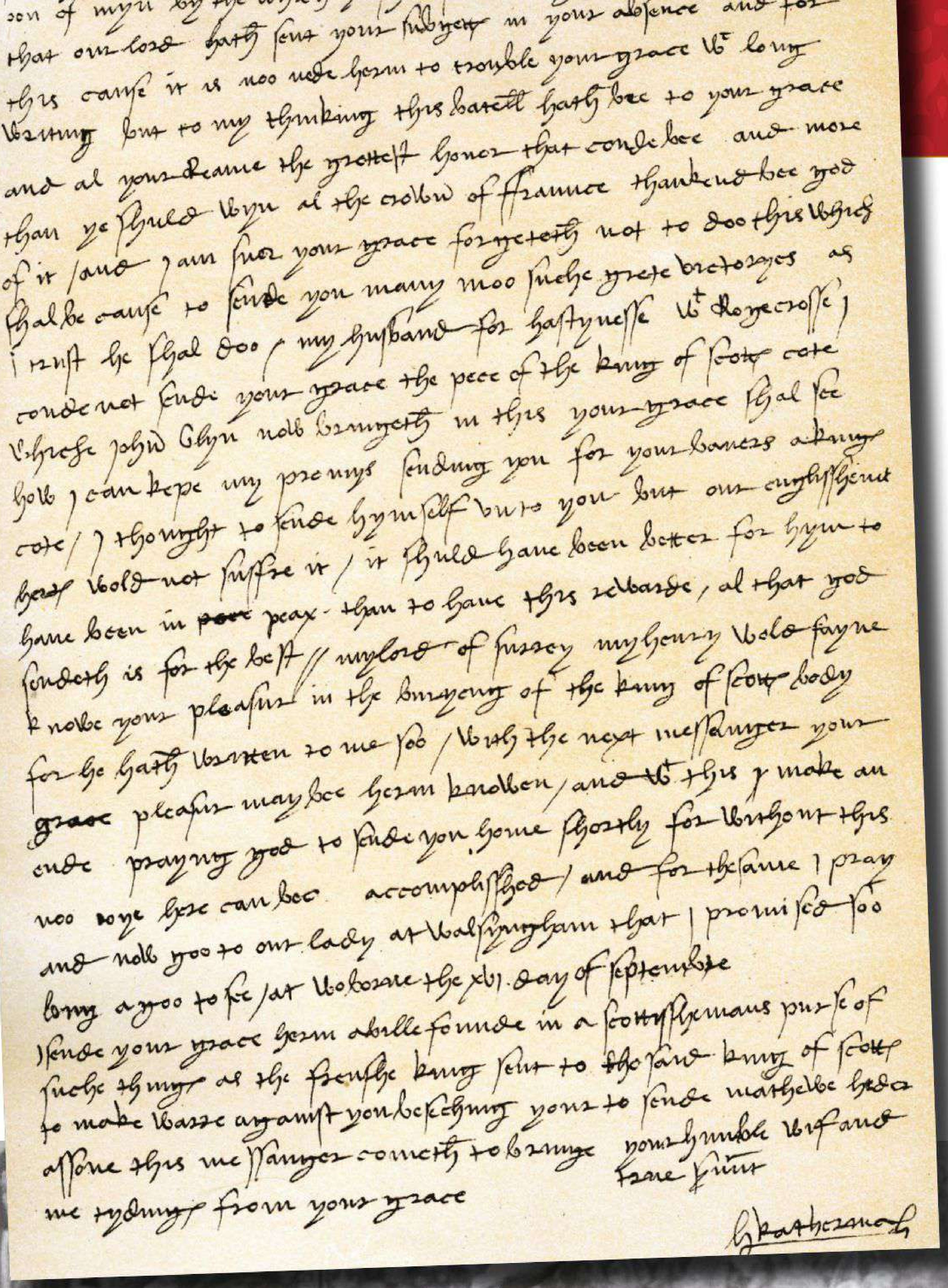
> "If his affair with Bessie hadn't already begun, it's likely that this was the year that it did"

ABOVE LEFT Balls and masquerades were popular in the Tudor court, and provided an opportunity for the King to seek out his next mistress

ABOVE Henry and Catherine married on 11 June 1509, and had a joint coronation at Westminster Abbey less than two weeks later

OPPOITE ABOVE Catherine of Aragon was a devoted wife until the end, and wrote to Henry every week while he was away fighting in France

OPPOSITE Henry's mistress Bessie Blount was renowned for her skill in music and dancing, and was a frequent player in court masques



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Katherina

The boy who would be king?

The only illegitimate child to be acknowledged by Henry VIII, the debate continues as to whether FitzRoy was ever the intended heir

Henry FitzRoy was raised in comfort and luxury, almost as if he were a prince of the blood and not a bastard born of a lowly mistress. But if a policy of discretion had been employed during the first few years of his life, by the time FitzRoy turned six this had been abandoned. In 1525, he was granted his own residence in London and on 18 June – possibly his birthday – he was brought to Bridewell Palace. There, during an elaborate ceremony, attended by his father, he was made Earl of Nottingham and Duke of Richmond and Somerset. It was the first time since the 12th century that an illegitimate child had been raised to the peerage.

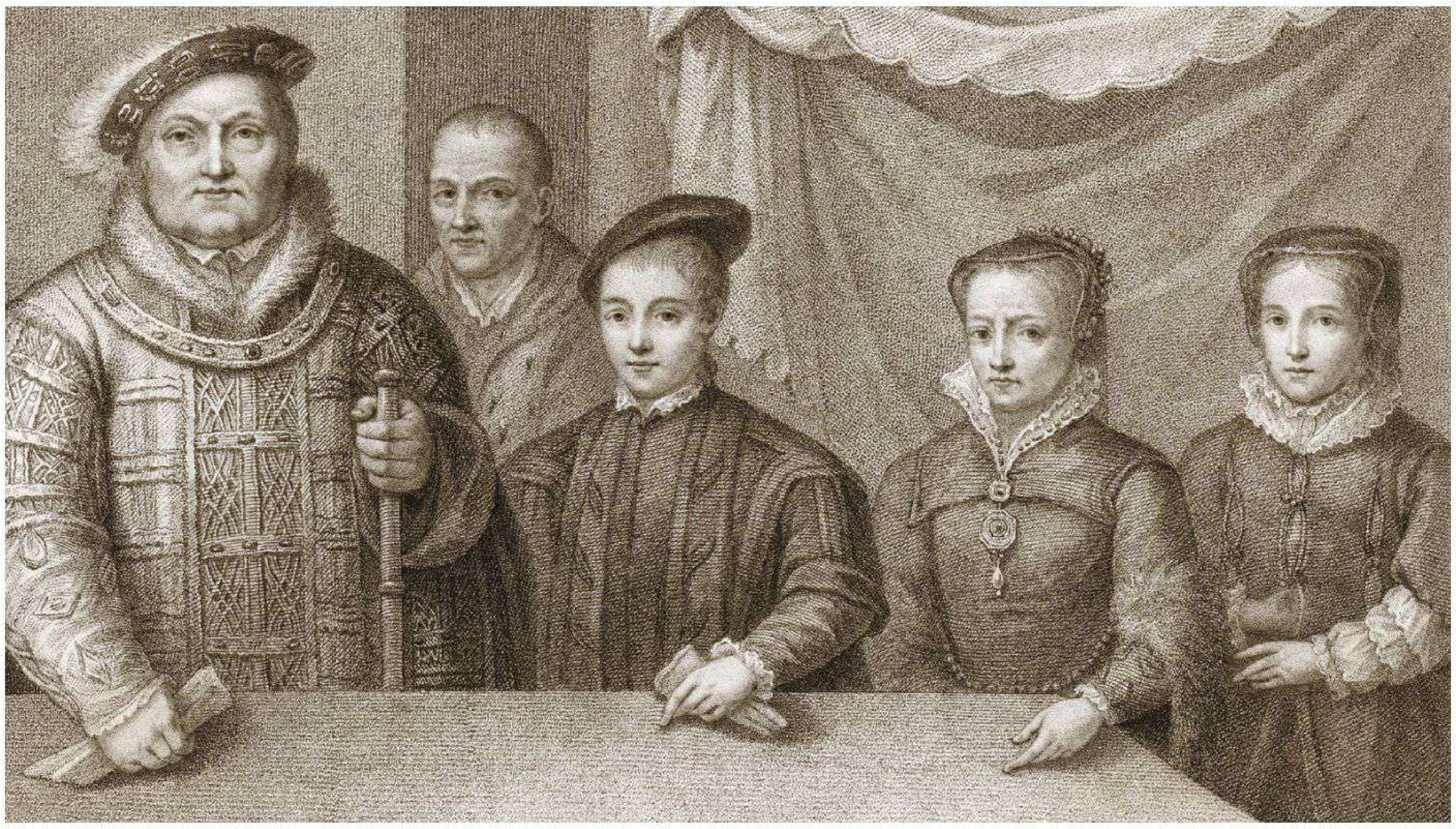
After he turned 14, Richmond, as he became known, married Lady Mary Howard – the daughter of the King's favourite Thomas Howard. But just three years later, he was reported ill with consumption and died at St James's Palace on 23 July 1536.

At the time of his death, an act was going through Parliament which disinherited Henry's daughter by Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth, as heir, and permitted the King to designate his successor, whether legitimate or not. Could it be that Henry had intended to make his bastard child the heir to the English throne? We will never know.

of Suffolk, wrote to him: "I beseech your grace to tell Mistress Blount and Mistress Carew the next time that I write unto them or send them tokens they shall either write to me or send me tokens again." At the Christmas masquerade that year, when she was partnered with Henry, Bessie was one of just eight chosen to participate, proving that she was already making waves in the royal court.

Meanwhile, the secretary to the Venetian ambassador reported that Catherine was "rather ugly than otherwise, and supposed to be pregnant, but the damsels of her court are handsome, and make a sumptuous appearance". Following the stillbirth in January, Catherine managed to conceive again and this time gave birth to a healthy child on 18 February 1516. Unfortunately, the child was a girl, who they named Mary. Henry could not hide his disappointment, but was reassured by his advisors – if it were a girl this time, then surely boys would follow.

Of course, we know now that this would not be the case. In 1517, Catherine suffered another miscarriage. The following year, she announced her seventh pregnancy, and on 10 November she gave birth. Not only was the child another girl, she was also sickly, and she died just a few days later. This would prove to be her final pregnancy, as shortly after, Catherine fell victim to early menopause. All hope of providing her husband with his much-longed-for male heir was lost.



Henry was now well aware that he would have to find alternative solutions. If his affair with Bessie hadn't already begun, it's likely that this was the year that it did. In 1517, Bessie's father John was appointed one of the king's esquires of the body, suggesting that something had caused her family to rise in prominence. Bessie continued to appear regularly in court masques until October 1518. But it's not until the spring of 1519 that we hear of her again, when she's reported of having left court to go and live in a house called Jericho in Blackmore, Essex, which the king had leased. Henry made frequent visits there and around this time, had Newhall Boreham built nearby. His closest servants were warned "not to enquire where the King is or goeth, be it early or late".

In June 1519, much to Henry's delight, Bessie gave birth to a son. She named him Henry and he was bestowed him with the Anglo-Norman surname 'FitzRoy', meaning 'son of a king', which had been used by several rulers of England for their illegitimate children.

The other women

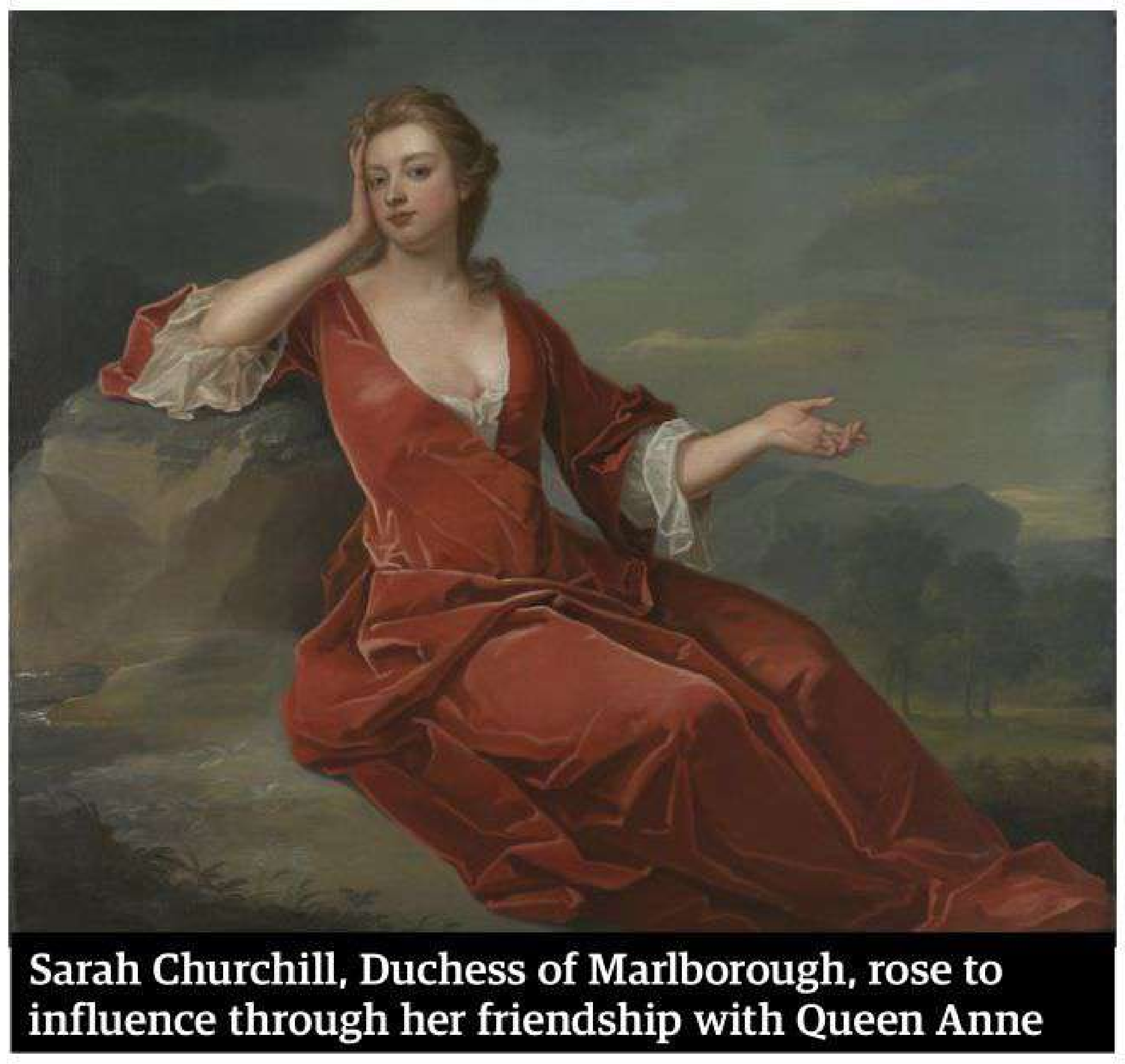
Extramarital affairs have historically been an almost-inevitable part of royal life

Royal mistresses have existed since the dawn of monarchy itself. With so many marriages built on political rather than romantic considerations, monarchs often found themselves in loveless relationships, and mistresses offered them a chance to explore their own sexual preferences. But beyond merely a physical relationship, mistresses often wielded extraordinary power. Many families actually vied for their daughters to become a king's lover, as there were great benefits to having a member of the family as a mistress. Though queens often chose to turn a blind eye, affairs could also be the cause of a great deal of friction, especially when they were being conducted by the queens' own ladies in waiting.

In the last century, Edward VII, son of Queen Victoria, was infamous for his affairs while married to his wife Alexandra, who was not only aware of them but also accepted them. Even the Duke of Edinburgh, in his position as consort, is rumoured to have been unfaithful on occasion.

Of course, in recent decades, members of the Royal Family have been less tolerant of infidelity – most famously Prince Charles and Diana, who separated after 11 years of marriage.

Edward VII and Alexandra



Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, rose to influence through her friendship with Queen Anne

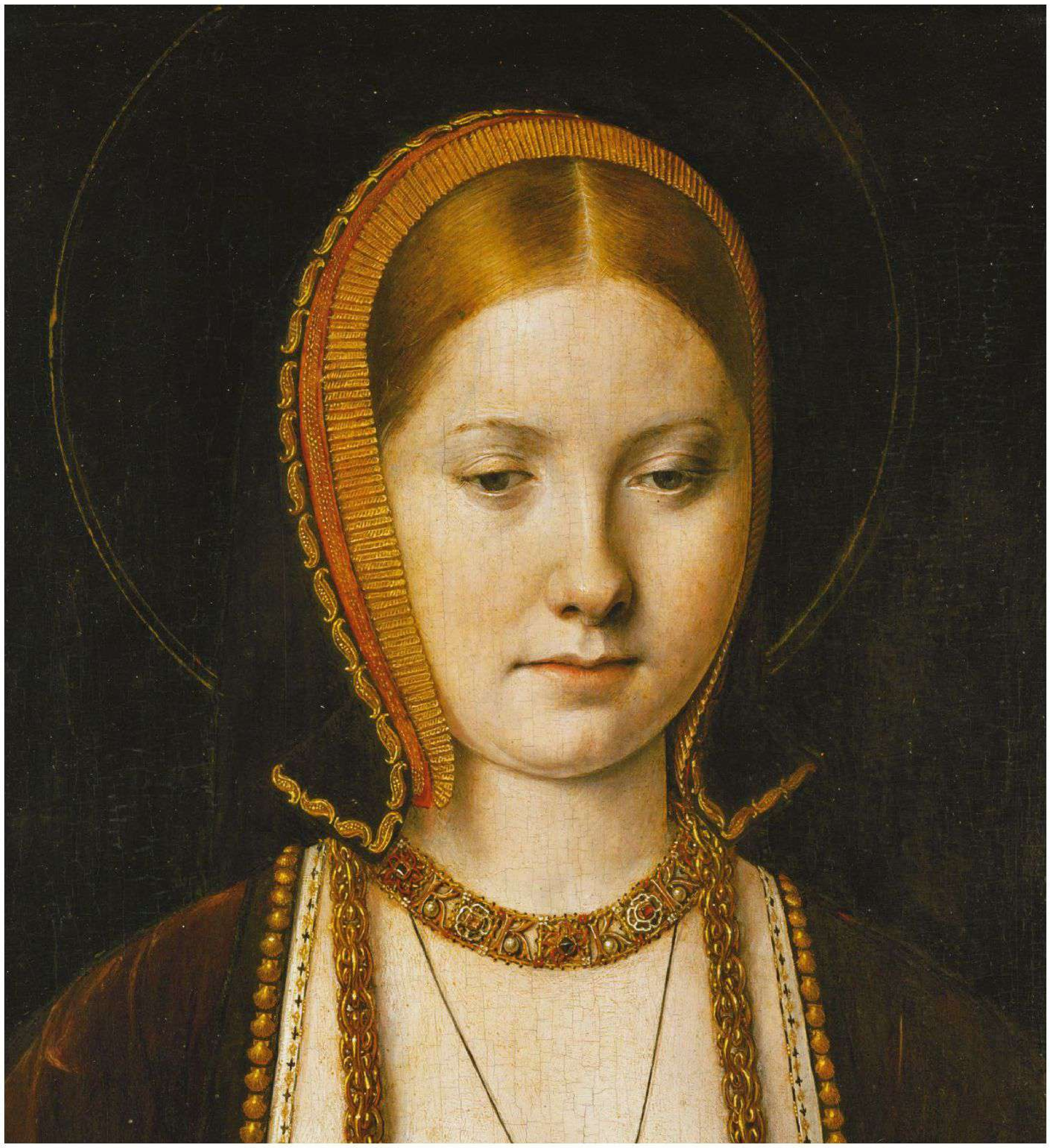
The tradition of the royal mistress continued into the 20th century, most famously with Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles

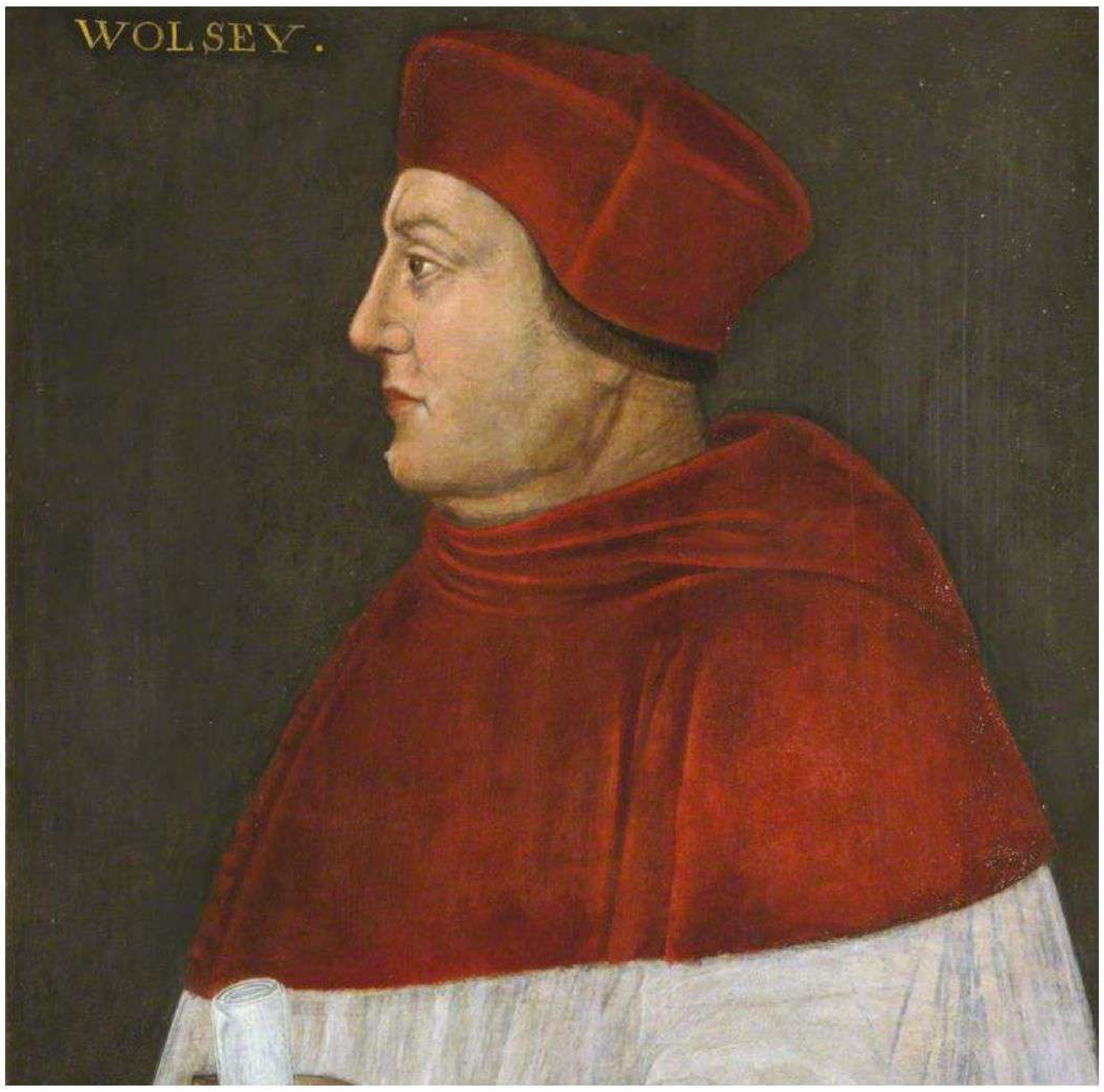
Cardinal Wolsey was appointed the boy's godfather. Henry stayed at two of his nearby properties that summer, Havering-atte-Bowe in August and Beaulieu in September, so it's likely he made time to visit his newborn son. Whether Catherine was aware of the situation at that time, we do not know, but the birth certainly caused no great stir, and diplomatic dispatches made no record of it.

We also know very little about the next few years of Bessie and her young son's life. It was not uncommon at that time for a king to arrange for one of his mistresses to marry once their relationship was over. Unfortunately, we have no record to determine when exactly Bessie married her husband, Gilbert Tailboys. Tailboys was a member of Wolsey's household and the Cardinal may have arranged the match. The first reference to her as 'Lady Tailboys' is in 1522, when Henry FitzRoy was three years old. It's possible that this was the year when she married, suggesting that Bessie and Henry's relationship continued after the birth of their son. However, Bessie and Gilbert's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, was recorded as being 22 in 1542, which means that she was conceived in either 1519 or 1520. Either the pair married earlier, and there is no record of it, or their daughter was fathered by another man. Could Henry have had a second illegitimate child with Bessie?

It was in 1522 that Henry spoke to the Bishop of Lincoln about annulling his marriage to Catherine. It was also the year that William Carey, the husband of his most famous mistress, Mary Boleyn, began to get grants from the king. Bessie had finally been replaced in his affections. After her marriage, Bessie does not feature much in the official records, but we know that she went on to have two more children with Tailboys. A passing comment was made about her in 1529, when a palace chaplain remarked that she was better-looking than Anne Boleyn. After Tailboys died in 1530, Bessie was left a widow of comfortable means, and she remarried several years later, bearing three more daughters. For a short time, she served Anne of Cleves as a lady-in-waiting, but died in 1540 - the same year that Anne's marriage to Henry was dissolved.

On the face of things, Bessie's affair with Henry VIII may seem inconsequential - after all, Henry FitzRoy died in 1536, aged 17, having never been declared eligible for the throne. But by birthing Henry a son, she had proved that it was Catherine, and not the king, who was to blame for the lack of a male heir. Perhaps, without this peace of mind, Henry would never have been able to justify an annulment. He would never have married Anne Boleyn, England would never have broken with Rome, and the course of history would have been very different indeed.





ABOVE Catherine of Aragon was 23 when she married Henry, and was described as being "the most beautiful creature in the world". However, seven pregnancies soon took their toll on the Queen

LEFT Cardinal Wolsey became immensely powerful - and wealthy - under King Henry VIII's reign

© Getty; Alamy; WIKI

Battle for the Bedchamber

Groomed for greatness, find out how Mary Boleyn rose through the ranks to become the king's obsession

Words ELIZABETH NORTON

Anne Boleyn's death on 19 May 1536 caused a stir across Europe. The death of Mary Boleyn seven years later attracted no notice at all. While the sisters had once followed each other to the royal courts of France and England, their fates were very different indeed. Anne and Mary both captivated Henry VIII, but only one was born to rule.

The sisters' births were so insignificant that no record was made of when, or where, they occurred. Mary was probably the eldest, born circa 1499, with her sister following a year or so later. A brother, George, completed the family, who were probably all born at Blickling Hall in Norfolk, England.

Mary and Anne's father, Sir Thomas Boleyn, was a gentleman, but he was also the descendant of London trade. His paternal grandfather had been a hatter, who became fabulously wealthy and went on to serve as lord mayor of London. He founded the family's fortune. Thomas Boleyn was a courtier, marrying the eldest daughter of the Earl of Surrey (later the second Duke of Norfolk) towards the end of the 15th century. Although (as Thomas later complained), his wife brought him "every year a child," the couple still managed to live in some style, with their children tutored at home at Blicking and, later, Hever Castle in Kent, which Thomas inherited in 1505.

The sisters' father was a quick-witted, educated man and renowned as the best French speaker at the English court. He was often sent on diplomatic embassies by Henry VIII, including one to Margaret of Austria, regent of the Netherlands, in 1512. Thomas and Margaret quickly established a rapport, developing such an easy relationship that they made a friendly wager over the likely outcome of the negotiations between Henry VIII and Margaret's father, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian. The pair were so friendly that Thomas was able to secure the acceptance of one of his daughters into the regent's household. Surprisingly, he chose his youngest daughter - Anne.

Anne was dark skinned and raven haired at a time when a pale face and blonde hair was the ideal standard of beauty. In appearance, she had little to recommend her, save her dark almond shaped eyes, which were captivating. Mary was, by all accounts, the more attractive of the two sisters, but Thomas evidently saw something else in his younger daughter, noting the intelligence that would later bring her to the throne of England.

Anne set out for Brussels in the summer of 1513, where she did not disappoint. Margaret wrote personally to Thomas to inform him that his daughter had arrived safely and that she was "of such good address and so pleasing in her youthful age that I am more beholden to you for having sent her to me than you are to me."

Anne quickly learned French, the language of Margaret's court, with her first surviving letter - appropriately enough addressed to her father - setting out the progress of her studies. Anne made an immediate impression on Margaret, but her

B

time with the regent was brief. In late 1514 she left Brussels to serve the young English princess, Mary Tudor, when she married Louis XII of France. There, Anne joined her sister, who was one of the ladies-in-waiting that accompanied Queen Mary to her new kingdom. The sisters were among the few English attendants who were permitted to remain after the wedding.

While marriage to a beautiful teenager initially invigorated Louis, he was dead within three months. The sisters then joined the widowed queen in seclusion at Cluny. During that time, their mistress secretly married Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, the greatest friend of her brother, Henry VIII, and returned home in disgrace - spiriting away some of the finest French royal jewels in the process.

This was not to prove the end of Anne and Mary Boleyn's time in France. They transferred to the household of the ugly, hunchbacked Queen Claude, who was the wife of Louis' cousin, Francis I. She was almost permanently pregnant and entirely overshadowed by her dashing, but unfaithful, husband. One brief affair was with the teenaged Mary Boleyn, whom the ungallant Francis would later describe as a "great whore." She was hurried home by her family and, on 4 February 1520, married the courtier William Carey - a solid, but unspectacular match. Mary also secured a place with Henry VIII's wife, Catherine of Aragon, at the English court. Her sister remained in France, becoming French in all but birth.

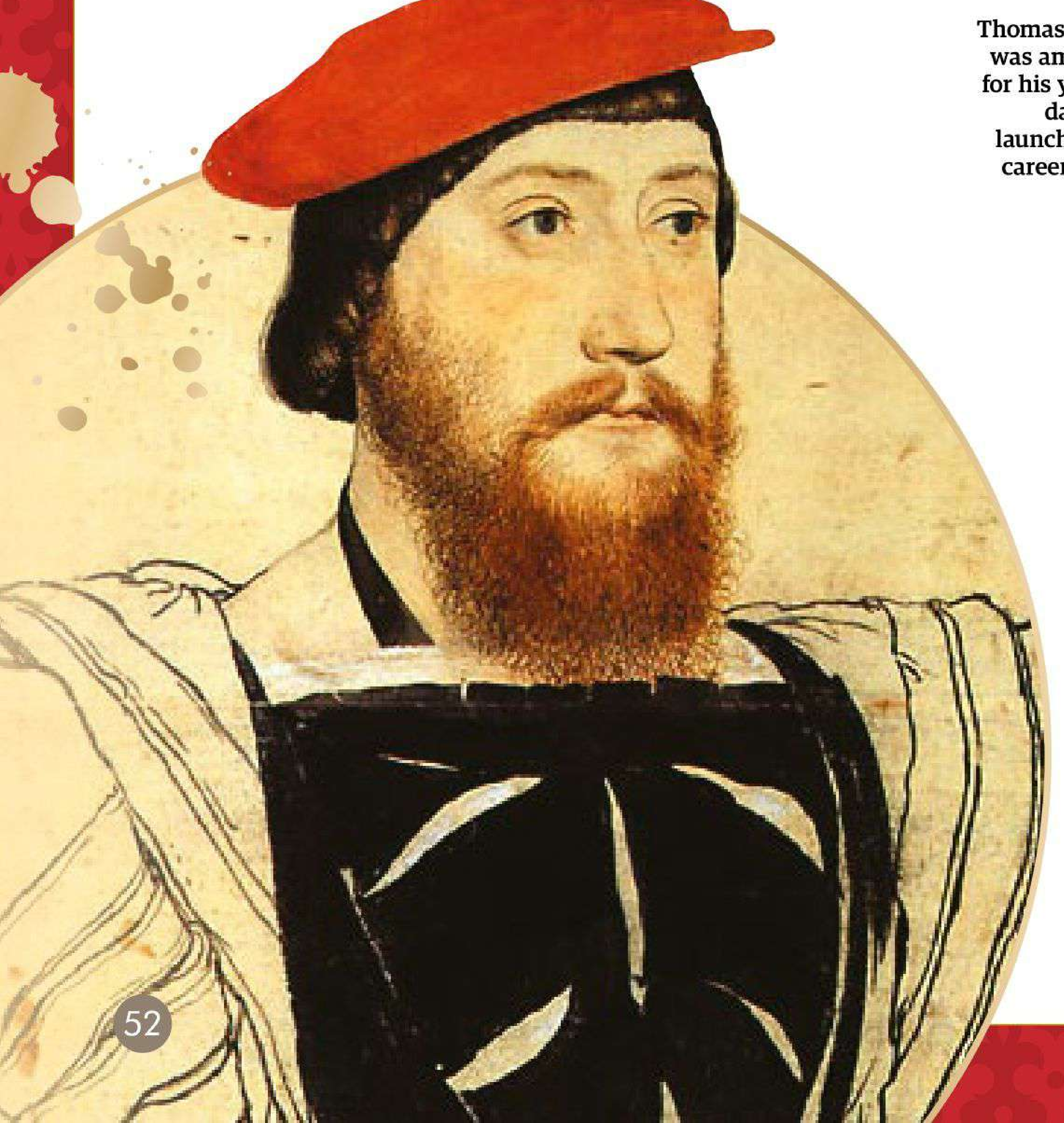
Mary Boleyn arrived at the English court at roughly the same time Henry VIII was casting an eye around for a new mistress. The English king was still in his youthful prime and renowned as the most handsome prince in Europe. He had also recently fathered a son, Henry Fitzroy, although not with his Spanish queen, Catherine of Aragon, whose last pregnancy had ended in 1518 with a stillbirth. Fitzroy's mother, Elizabeth Blount, was rewarded with marriage to a peer, creating a vacancy in the king's bedchamber.

Mary Boleyn was more conventionally beautiful than her sister and had been well-schooled by her mother, the accomplished courtier Elizabeth Howard. It was speculated that Elizabeth herself had been a mistress of the king's, but when Henry VIII was later challenged that he had 'meddled' with both Anne Boleyn's mother and sister, he replied bashfully "never with the mother." With Mary, however, it was a different story.

Unlike Francis I, Henry VIII was discreet in his love affairs, with little evidence of his relationship with Mary, aside from his own later admission. From early 1522, Mary's husband began to receive significant royal grants, suggesting that he accepted the relationship between his wife and the king. Mary, who remained in Catherine of Aragon's household, also began to star in court masques and entertainments. While there is no evidence that either her husband or her parents pressed her to accept the king, they may well have done. William Carey received a number of financial incentives, while Thomas Boleyn was appointed treasurer of the household in April 1522, a Knight of the Garter the following year and, in June 1525, ennobled as Viscount Rochford.

Mary's children, too, may have been fathered by the king, although Henry acknowledged only one illegitimate child - Henry Fitzroy - during his lifetime. In around 1524 she gave birth to a daughter, Catherine Carey, while a son, Henry, followed in March 1526. There were certainly rumours about the children, with the vicar of Isleworth, for one, stating during his examination by the royal council on 20 April 1535 that "Mr Skidmore did show to me young Master Carey, saying that he was our sovereign lord the king's son by our sovereign lady the queen's sister, whom the queen's grace might not suffer to be in the court." Since Mary was married throughout her affair with Henry, the children's paternity may have been uncertain, but the rumours later damaged the relationship between the Boleyn sisters.

Thanks to her relationship with Henry VIII, it was Mary who was the most prominent Boleyn in the early 1520s. Anne finally returned to England in early 1522 when, no doubt thanks to her sister's influence, she was able to enter Catherine of Aragon's household. That March, she was honoured by being appointed as one of only eight court ladies to dance in a masque at Greenwich. The ladies, who each portrayed a virtue, were besieged in a mock castle by a group of masked knights, led by the king. It was 'Beauty' - portrayed by Mary Tudor - who danced with the king, while Mary Boleyn was prominent among the white satin clad


Thomas Boleyn was ambitious for his younger daughter, launching her career in 1513

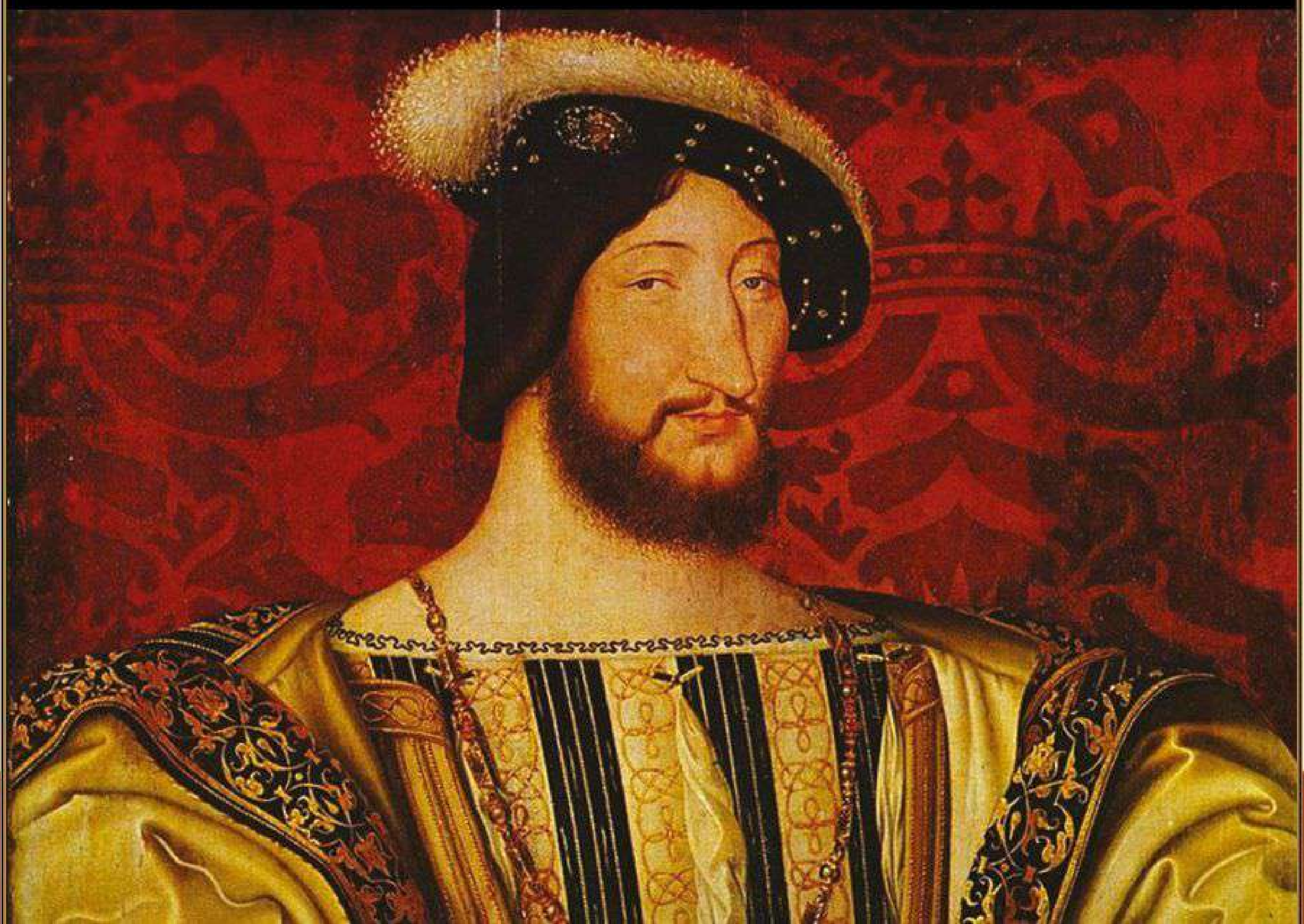
Secrets of the French court

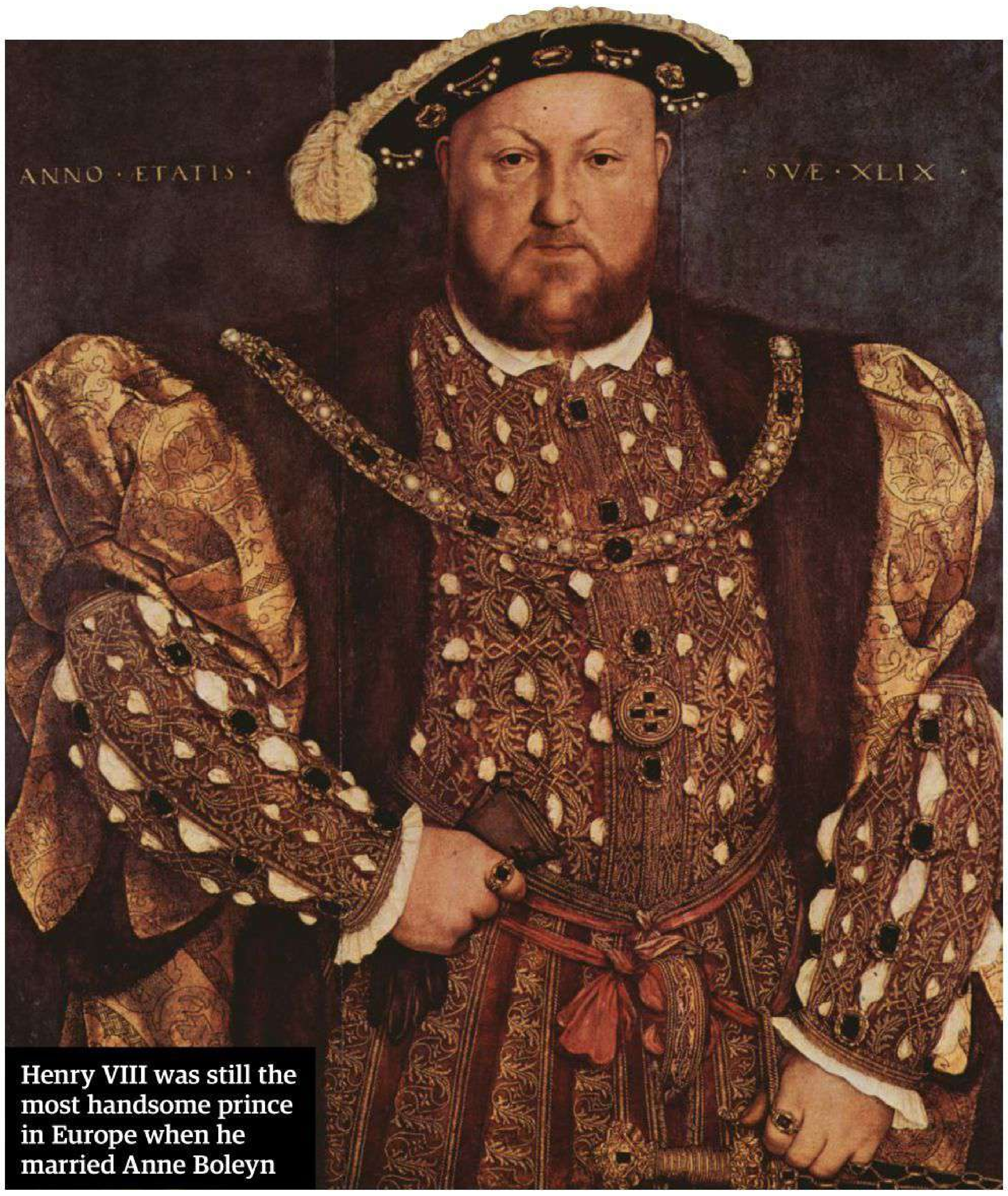
How Mary Boleyn became intertwined with French royal affairs

Anne and Mary Boleyn remained in France when their former mistress, Mary Tudor, who was the widow of Louis XII, returned to England in 1515. They transferred into the service of Claude, Louis' 15-year-old daughter and the wife of the new king, Francis I.

Francis was very different to his 'aged' predecessor. At 21, he was young, handsome and athletic, making no pretence of being faithful to his queen. He first made advances to his wife's stepmother, Mary Tudor, later recalling that she was "more dirty than queenly." He stopped short of consummating this relationship after being warned that, should the dowager queen become pregnant, the child might be attributed to Louis. Francis would therefore remain "plain Comte d'Angouleme, and never King of France."

Instead, Francis turned his attentions to the women of his court, who were rumoured to be as promiscuous as their king. One who caught his eye was Mary Boleyn. The relationship was brief, but it wash enough for the French king to later declare that Mary was "a very great whore and infamous above all." The elder Boleyn sister was soon shipped home by her scandalised family, while Anne - to whom no scandal was attached - remained in France.

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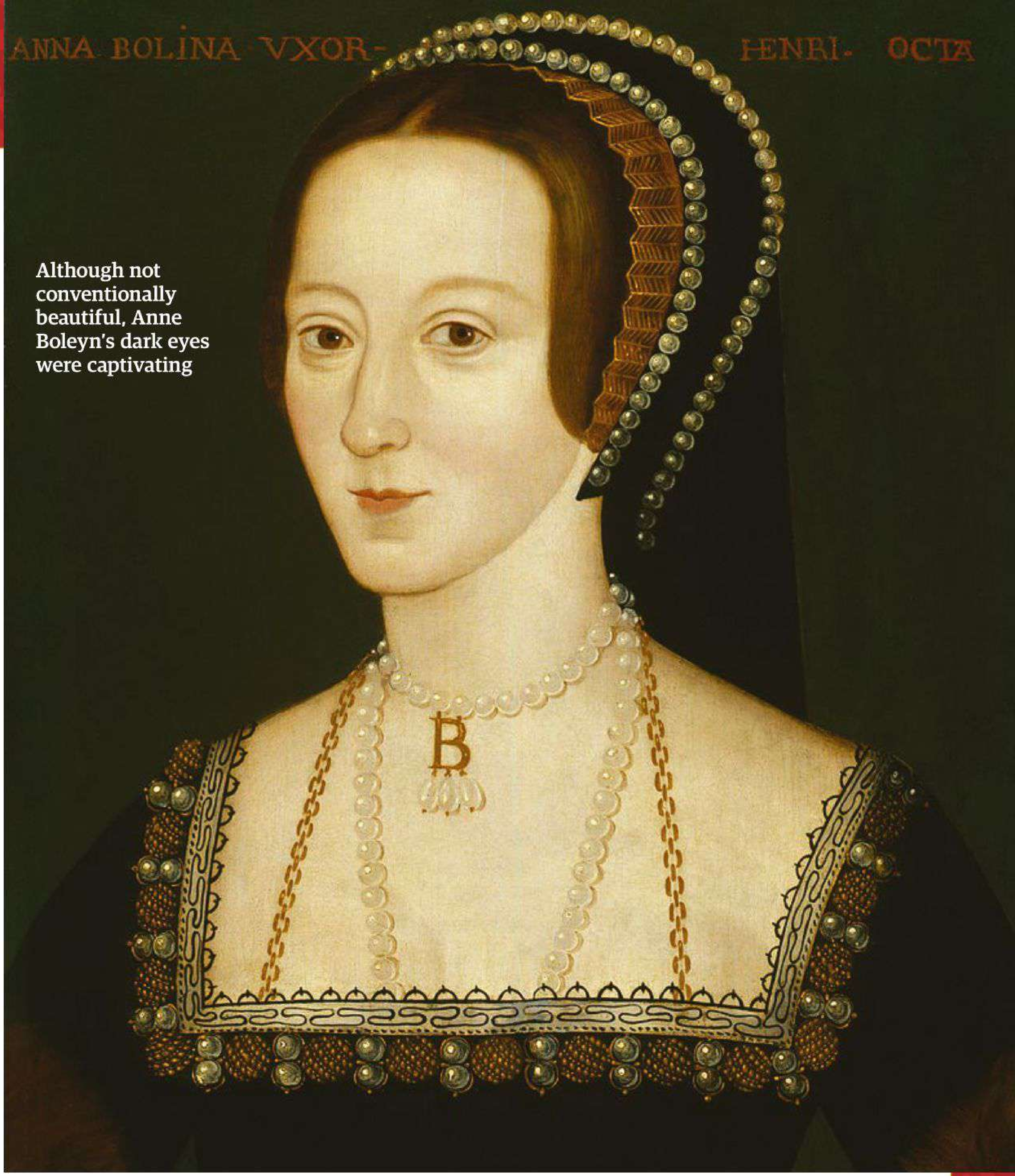
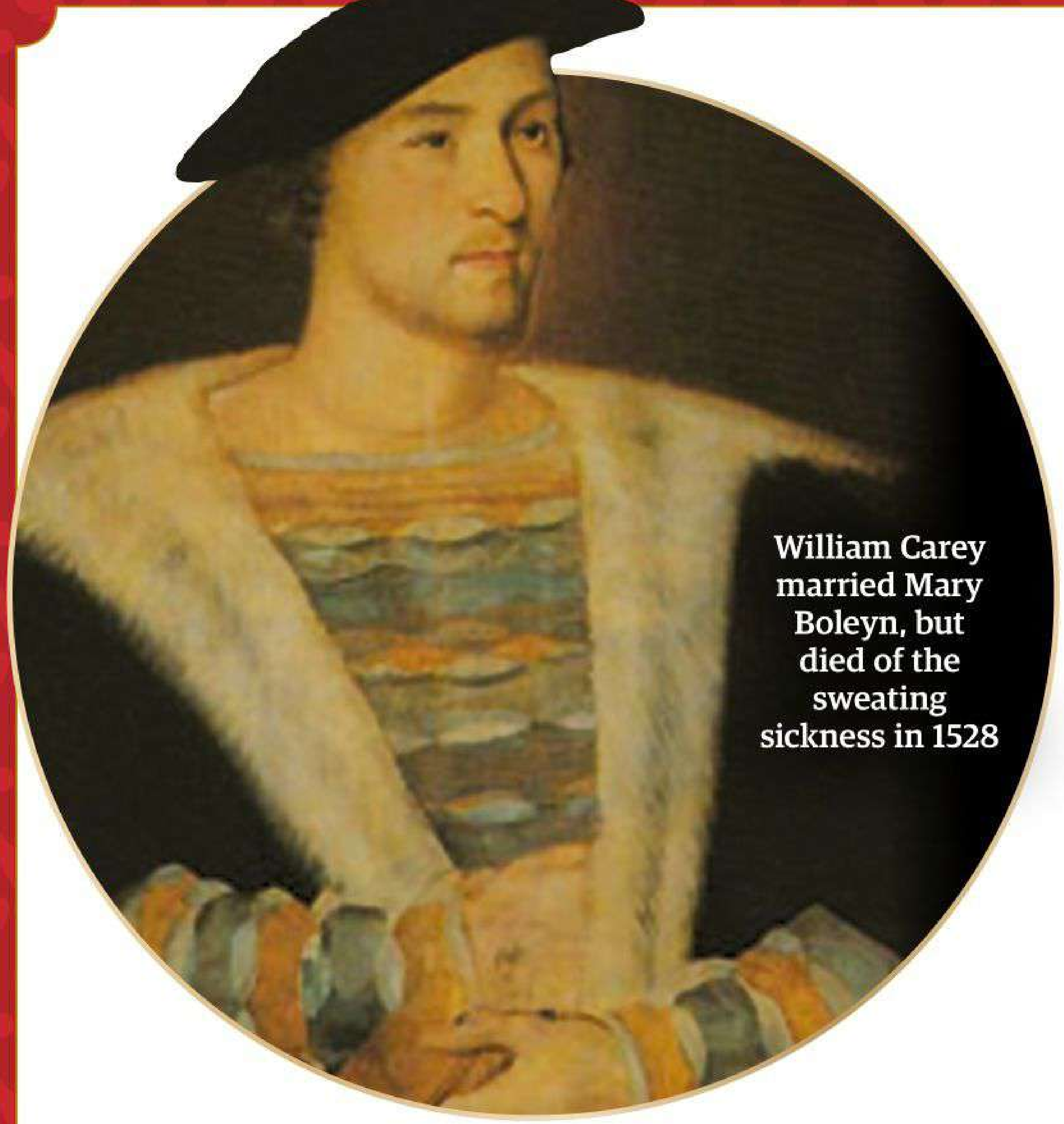
Henry VIII was still the most handsome prince in Europe when he married Anne Boleyn


ANNA BOLINA VXOR- HENRI- OCTA

Although not conventionally beautiful, Anne Boleyn's dark eyes were captivating

Hever Castle in Kent, the childhood home of the Boleyn sisters



William Carey married Mary Boleyn, but died of the sweating sickness in 1528

> "Anne, who wanted to marry well, was not interested in becoming Henry's concubine"

ladies as 'Kindness'. Anne, appropriately enough as it would later prove, was 'Perseverance'. A place was also found for the siblings' future sister-in-law, Jane Parker, a woman later accused by one courtier of being driven by her "lust and filthy pleasure."

Thanks to Mary, the Boleyn family were in the ascendancy in the early 1520s, although Anne's time at court was to be brief. Soon after arriving, she entered into a secret relationship with Henry Percy, heir to the earldom of Northumberland and leagues above her socially. The young man, who enjoyed visiting Catherine's household, would "fall in dalliance among the queen's maidens" and openly favoured the graceful Anne.

It was soon rumoured that the couple were engaged, with both Cardinal Wolsey – in whose household Percy served – and the king becoming furious when they heard. Percy's father was equally enraged, spiriting his son away where he was hurriedly married to the daughter of the Earl of Shrewsbury. Anne was sent home to Hever in disgrace.

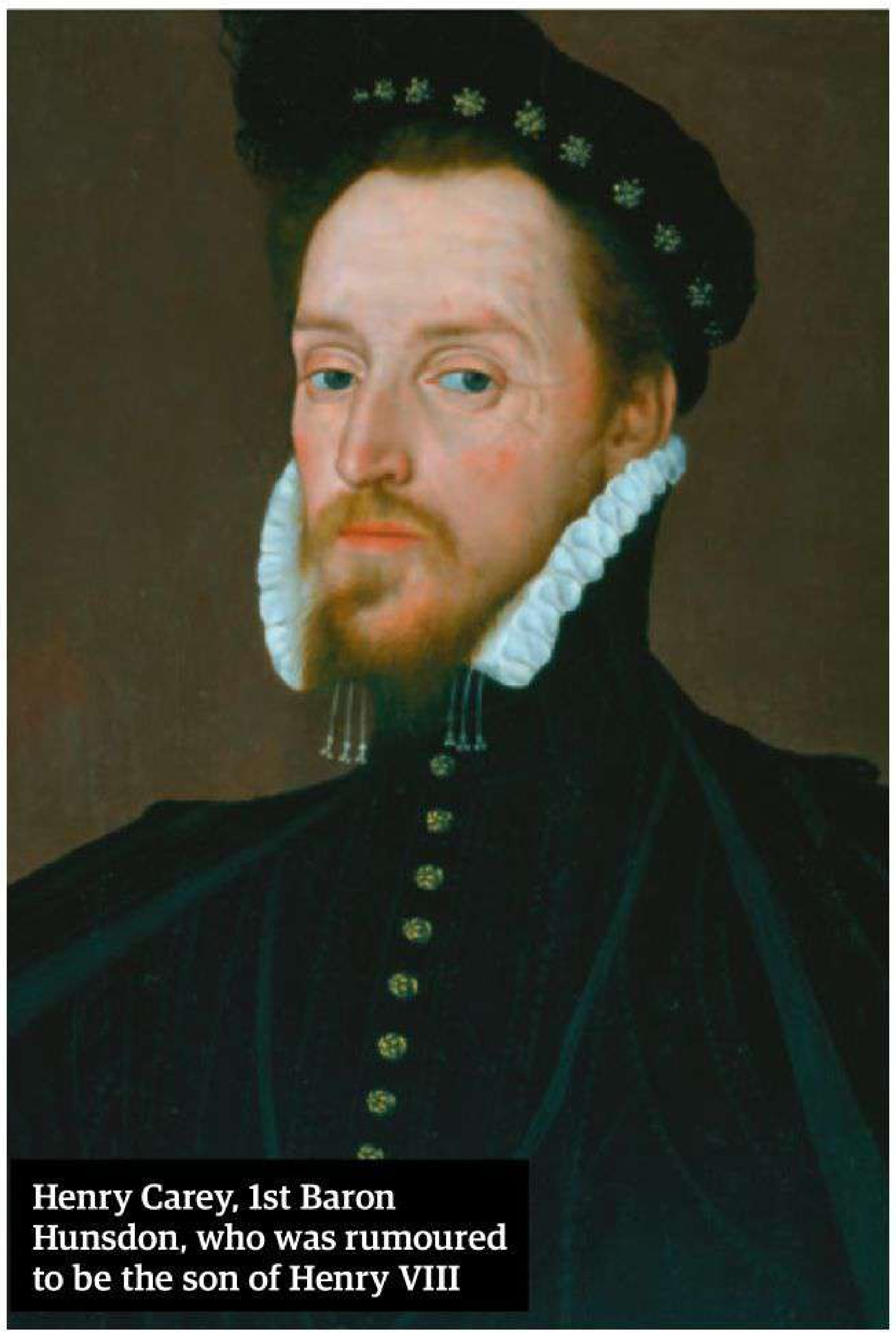
During Anne's time in Kent, Mary Boleyn's relationship with the king began to fizzle out. Although she had been his mistress for years, Mary, as a married woman, had no hopes of marrying the king – nor would Henry VIII have even considered it. The king, who had come to the throne as a 17 year old in 1509, had almost immediately married his former sister-in-law, Catherine of Aragon – the widow of his elder brother and more than five years his senior. At first, the royal marriage had seemed to be a love-match, with Henry taking delight in surprising Catherine with dancing and merriments. As the years passed, however, the age gap between the couple, which had once seemed so insignificant, became a chasm. Catherine, who lost all but one of her children – a daughter, Mary – in infancy, turned to the church for solace, while Henry looked towards other women. By 1525, when Anne Boleyn was finally permitted to return to court, he had no prospect of a legitimate son.

When Anne Boleyn caught Henry's eye around 1526, he was looking only for a new mistress, hoping that she would replace her sister in his affections. In February 1526 he made a public display of his new love by arriving at a joust wearing the motto 'Declare I dare not.' To Henry's surprise, Anne – who had witnessed her sister's abandonment – refused to follow her into the king's bed.

Instead, she retreated home to Hever, where she was followed by Henry's increasingly ardent and frustrated letters. He said he was reminded "of a point in astronomy which is this: the longer the days are, the more distant is the Sun, and nevertheless the hotter; so is it with our love, for by absence we are kept a distance from one another, and yet it retains its fervour, at least on my side." In another missive, he complained that "it seems a very poor return for the great love which I bear you to keep me at a distance both from speech and the person of the woman that I esteem most in the world." He was desperate to hold her in his arms, "whose pretty dukkys [slang for breasts] I trust shortly to kiss."

In the years that followed, Mary was suddenly widowed in 1528 when William Carey was struck down by the terrifying sweating sickness – a highly infectious disease that could infect and kill within hours. Just a few years later, Anne conceived a second child early in 1534 and, that summer, sent for her sister to attend her at the birth. To the surprise and anger of the queen and her parents, Mary appeared visibly pregnant and was soon forced to admit that she had secretly married a servant, William Stafford, earlier that year. She would later explain herself, begging the king's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, whom she asked to intercede with her sister, to "consider, that he [Stafford] was young, and love overcame reason," and while "I might have had a greater man of birth and higher… I assure you I could never have had one that should have loved me so well, nor a more honest man."

Mary was upset by her family's fury, but she was unrepentant, declaring of her husband that "I had rather beg my bread with him than be the greatest queen in Christendom." Mary Boleyn, who had been the mistress of kings, eventually chose love over worldly status. Mary disappeared into obscurity after her sister's death, living out her years with the husband she had married for love. She died on 19 July 1543, only seven years after her sister.



Henry Carey, 1st Baron Hunsdon, who was rumoured to be the son of Henry VIII

Mary Boleyn

The elder but less well-known Boleyn sister, who was mistress to two kings

1499

Probable birth
Mary Boleyn was probably born in 1499 at Blickling Hall in Norfolk. She is the eldest surviving child and raised with her younger sister, Anne, and brother, George.

1514

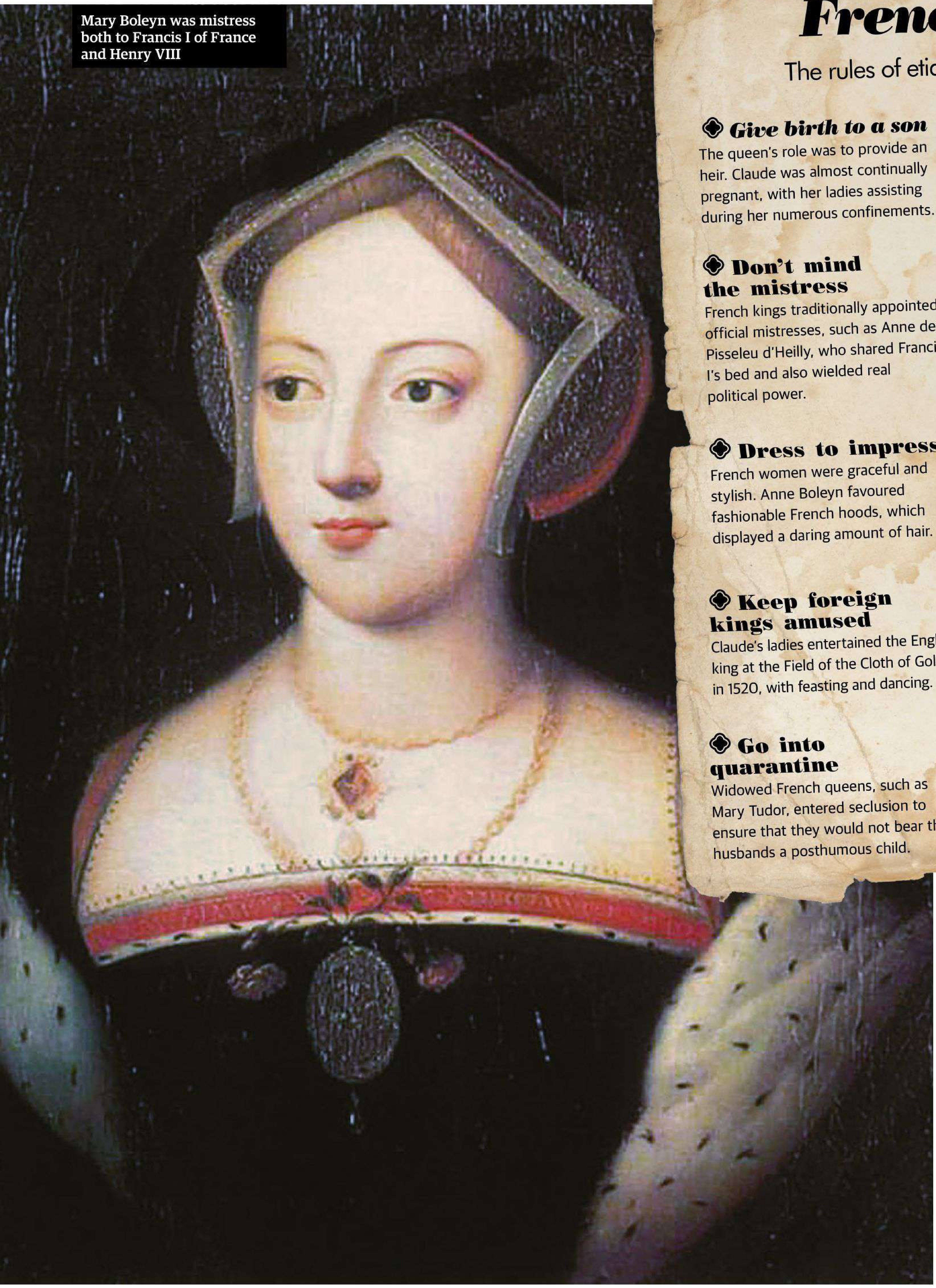
Arrival in France
Mary arrives in France to serve the new French queen. She was soon joined by her sister, Anne. Mary and Anne remain behind when their widowed mistress returns to England in 1515.

1520

Marries William Carey
Some time after returning to England, Mary marries the courtier, William Carey, on 4 February 1520, before taking up a court position in the household of Queen Catherine of Aragon.

1522

Becomes a royal mistress
Mary became Henry VIII's mistress in around 1522, bearing two children who may have been fathered by the king. Thanks to her prominence, the sisters danced at a court masque that March.



Mary Boleyn was mistress both to Francis I of France and Henry VIII

Women of the French court

The rules of etiquette must be obeyed

◆ Give birth to a son

The queen's role was to provide an heir. Claude was almost continually pregnant, with her ladies assisting during her numerous confinements.

◆ Don't mind the mistress

French kings traditionally appointed official mistresses, such as Anne de Pisseleu d'Heilly, who shared Francis I's bed and also wielded real political power.

◆ Dress to impress

French women were graceful and stylish. Anne Boleyn favoured fashionable French hoods, which displayed a daring amount of hair.

◆ Keep foreign kings amused

Claude's ladies entertained the English king at the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520, with feasting and dancing.

◆ Go into quarantine

Widowed French queens, such as Mary Tudor, entered seclusion to ensure that they would not bear their husbands a posthumous child.

> "Kings had long been invoking all-conquering King Arthur to legitimise their exploits"

© Alamy; WIKI; Thinkstock

1525

One relationship ends, another begins

Mary's relationship with Henry ends around this time, with the king instead looking to Anne Boleyn to become his new mistress. She refuses him and returned to Hever.

1528

William Carey dies

Mary's husband, William Carey, dies suddenly of the sweating sickness, leaving her a widow in her late twenties with two children to raise.

1534

Secret marriage

Mary secretly marries her servant, William Stafford. She appears at court visibly pregnant and is banished by her furious sister, who lost her own baby soon afterwards.

1543

Death of Mary Boleyn

Mary dies in obscurity seven years after her sister. She was wealthy, having inherited much of the Boleyn fortune from her parents. She leaves behind a husband and two children.

The religious years

Once a staunch Catholic, Henry sought to separate from Rome in his endeavour for a legitimate heir

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Fickle friends & foul foes 1527-1535

Meet the allies and enemies of King Henry VIII

60

A forbidden Queen

Follow the romantic beginning of the love affair that rocked the very foundations of England itself

66

The wolf of Wolf Hall

How a Putney-born pauper rose to the rank of the king's closest confidant

76

Defender of the faith?

Once the Pope's staunchest ally, did Henry VIII ever truly break from Rome?

86

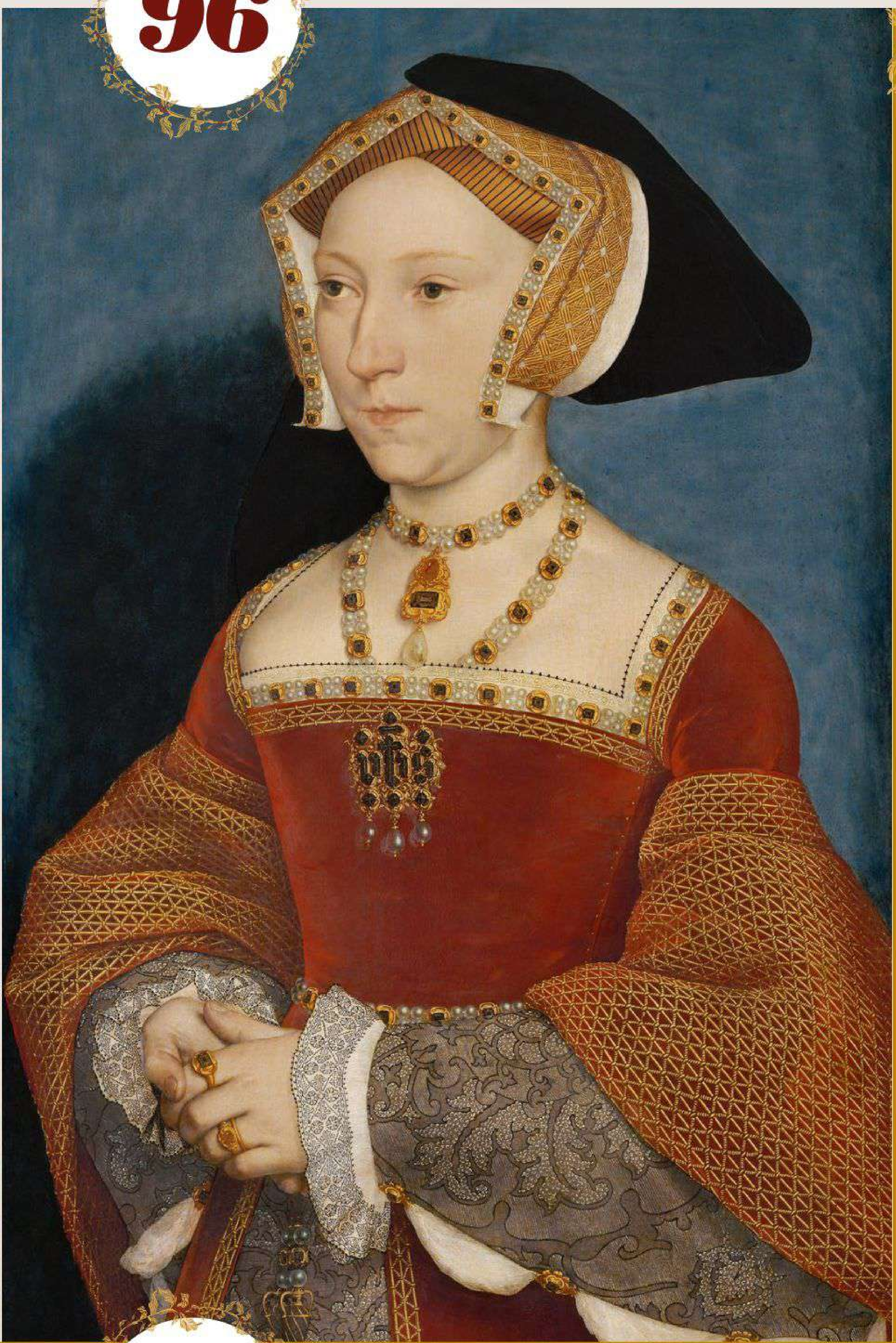
Anne Boleyn on trial

In May 1536 Henry's second wife was executed by a French swordsman, but what led to her brutal end?

96

The true wife

Declared Henry's true wife, did Jane scheme her way to the king's side?



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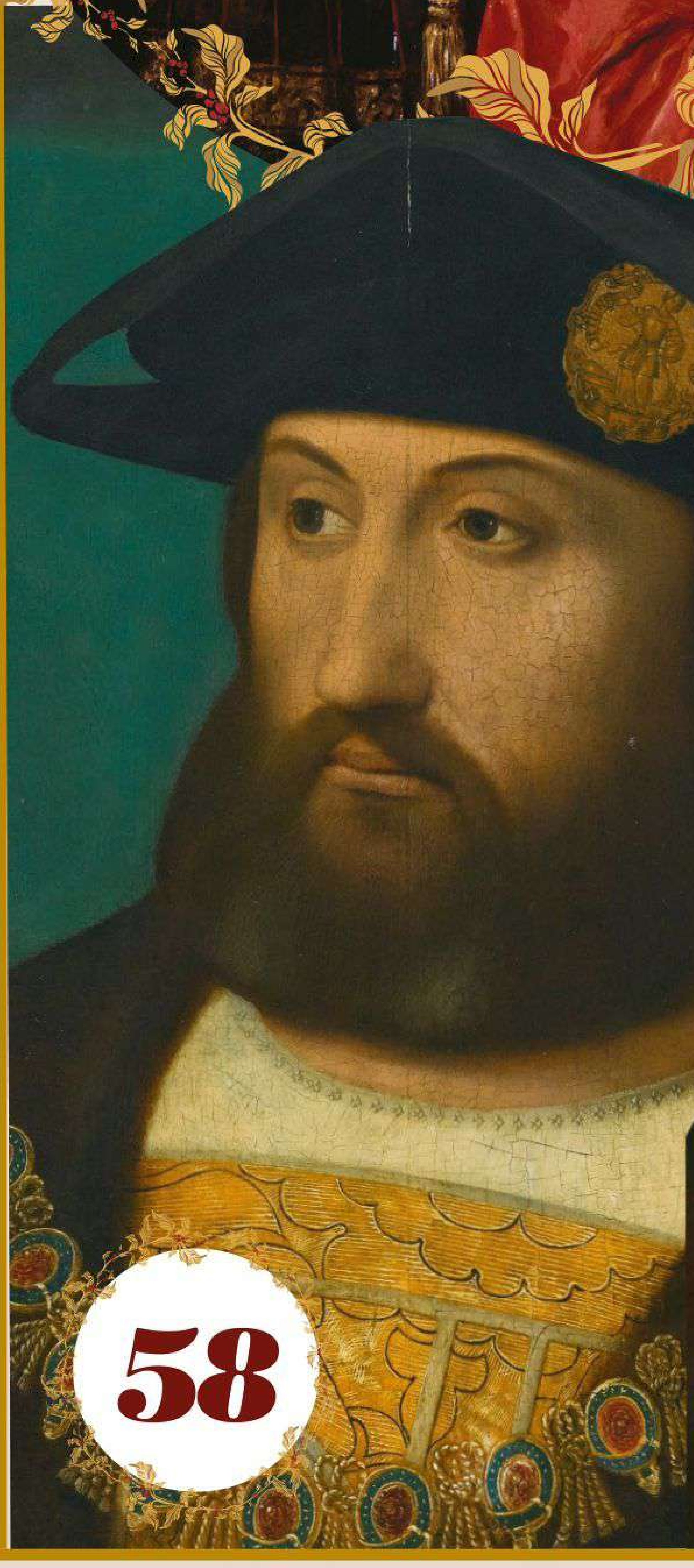

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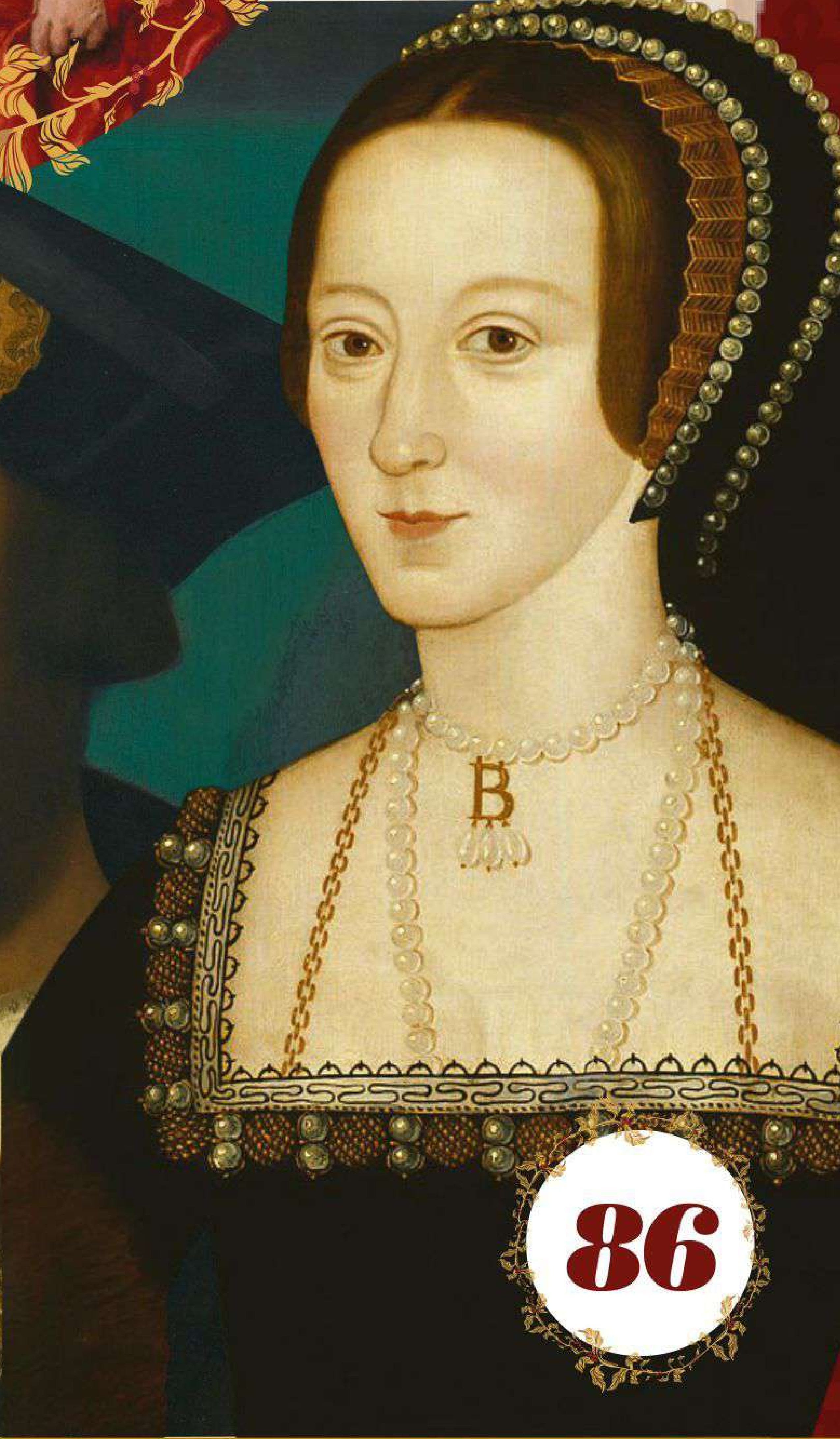

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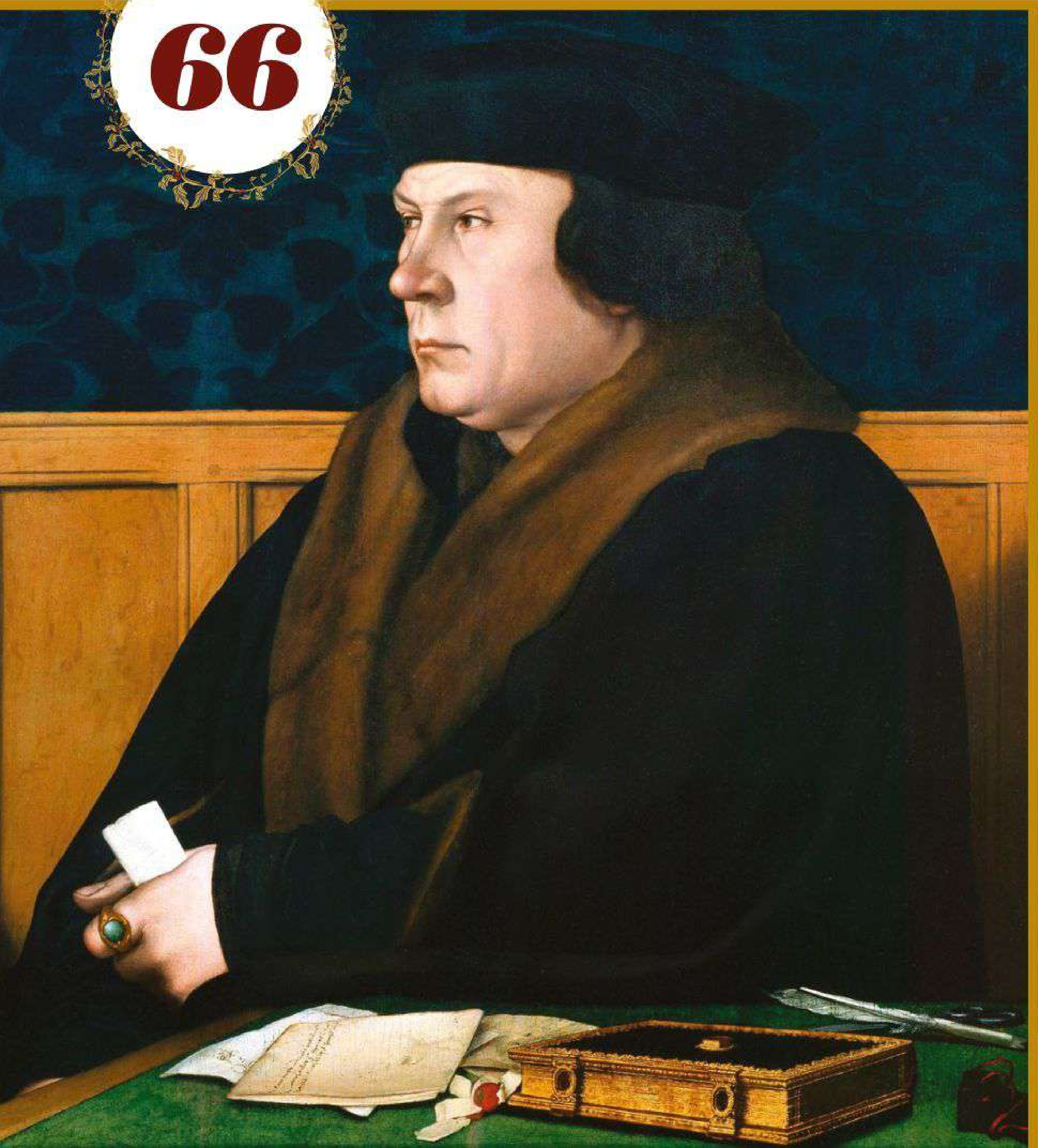

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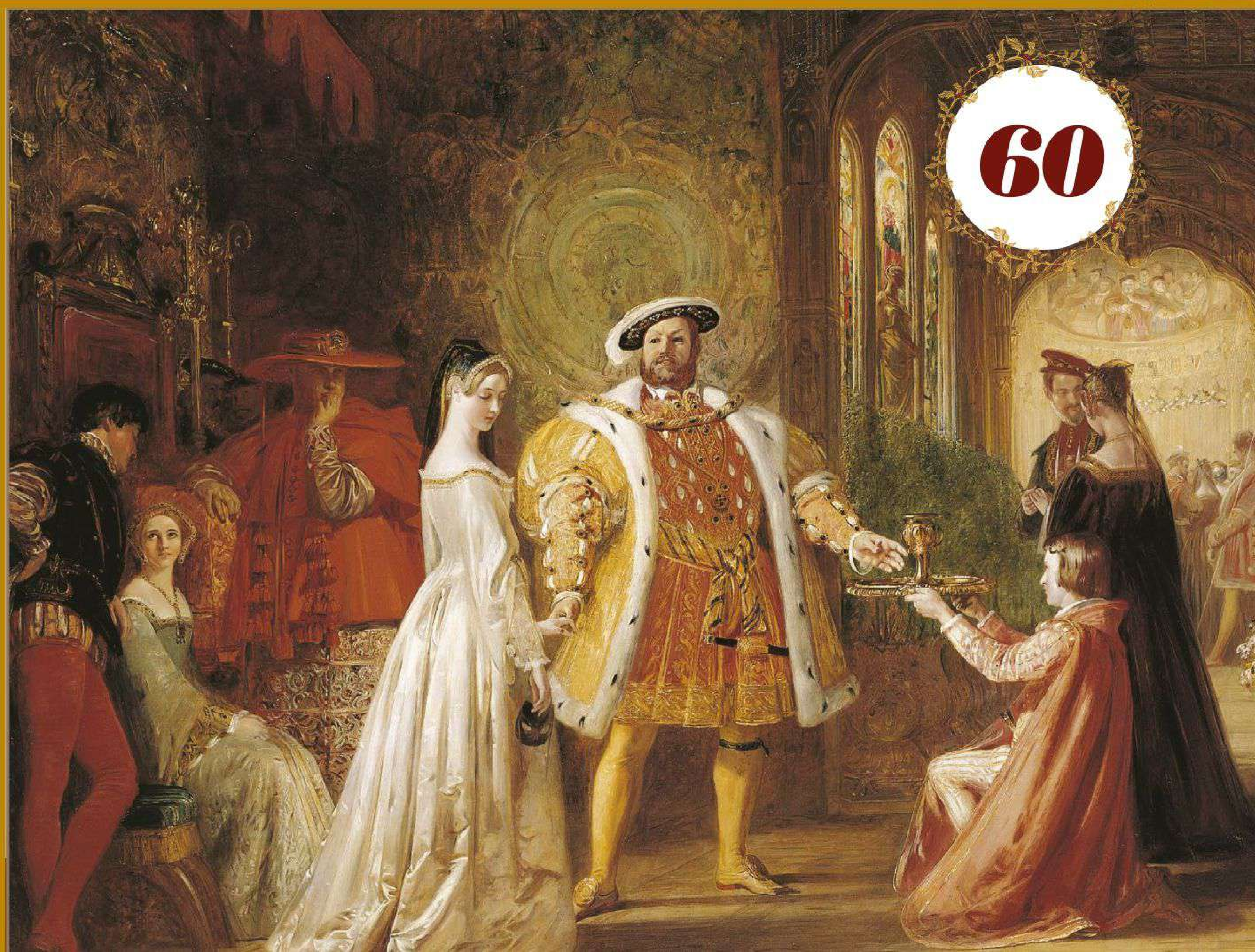

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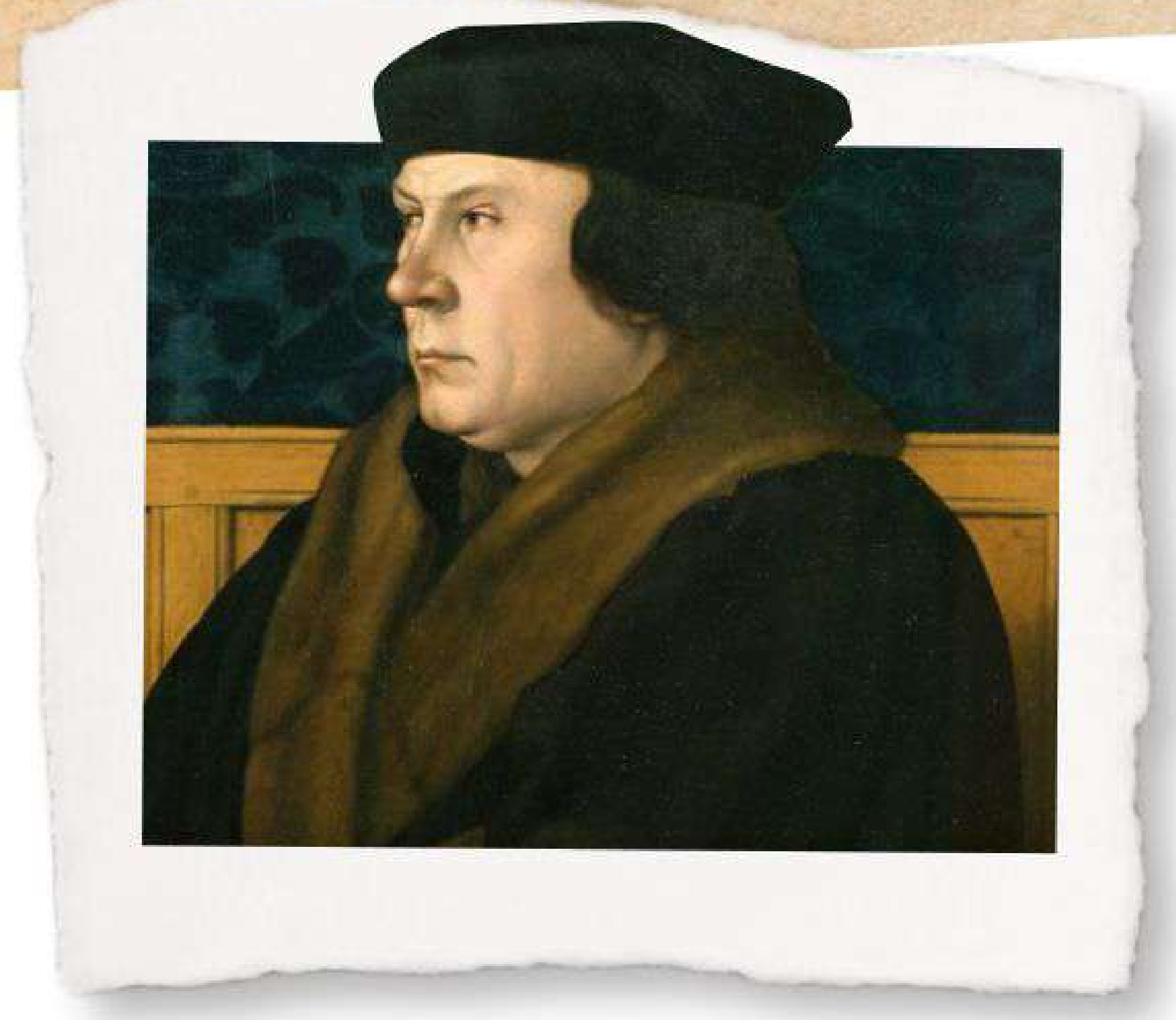
Henry VIII's HIT LIST

1527-1535

As the king suffered through his 'Great Matter', the following years proved to be the making – and breaking – of Henry's closest allies

Words ALICEA FRANCIS



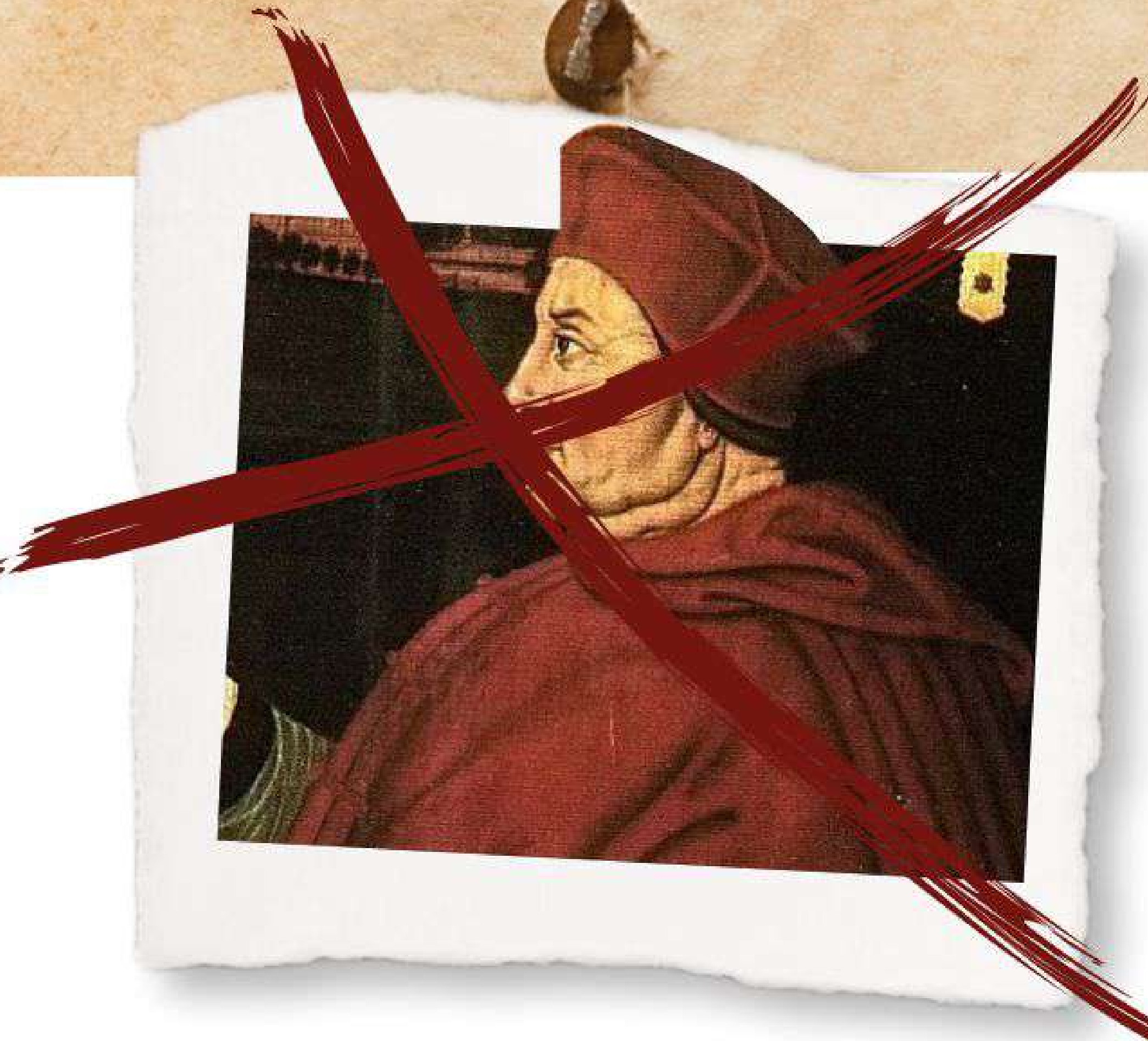
THOMAS CROMWELL

The rise of the ruffian

b.1485-d.1540

Friend or Foe? Friend

By 1529, Cromwell was one of Wolsey's most trusted advisers. But that year, disaster befell the cardinal – he had so far failed in his task to secure an annulment between Henry and Catherine and in late October he was charged with treason. In the power void left behind, Cromwell saw an opportunity. Gaining the king's ear, he devised a plan to break from Rome and make Henry the supreme head of a Church of England, thus allowing him to divorce his wife. In 1532, the House of Commons accepted Henry's new position and Cromwell became master of the jewels, clerk of the hanaper and chancellor of the exchequer. The next year, Henry was finally able to marry Anne. Cromwell was made the king's principal secretary, chief minister and vicar-genera. His policies in this new role would mark Anne's undoing.



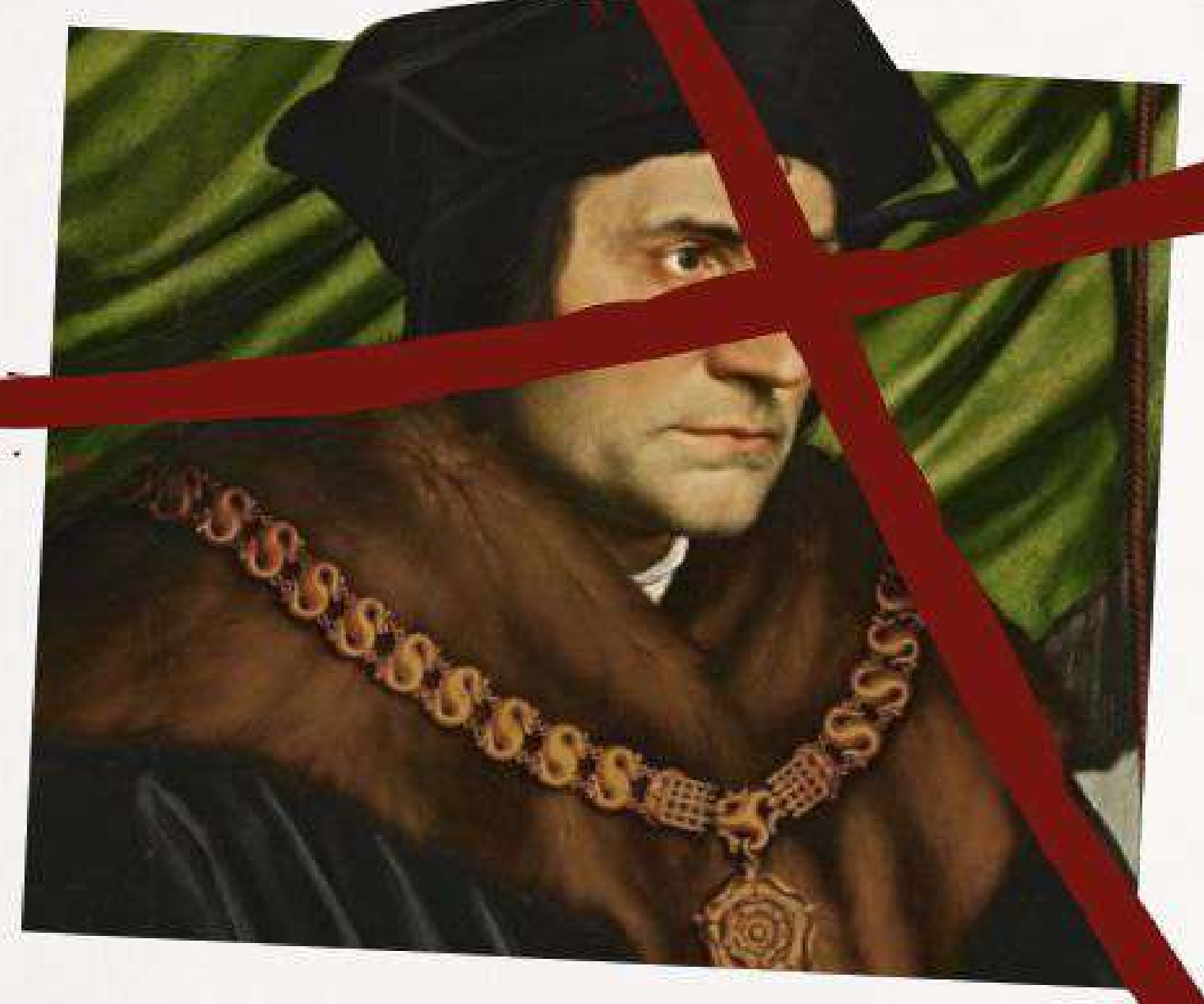
CARDINAL WOLSEY

The fall from favour

b.1473-d.1530

Friend or Foe? Foe

When it became clear that Catherine could not give him a son, Henry ordered Cardinal Wolsey to secure approval for an annulment from the pope. Two years later, he had yet to do this and things turned sour. It's thought Anne Boleyn convinced Henry that Wolsey was responsible for slowing down proceedings and in September 1529, the cardinal was stripped of his position and property. He set about trying to organise a rapprochement with Catherine and Rome, which resulted in Henry receiving a papal edict in October demanding that he leave Anne. Anne was furious and swore to end their liaison unless Henry got rid of Wolsey once and for all. A warrant for the cardinal's arrest was signed and he was called to London to face trial. Unfortunately, he fell ill during the journey and died.



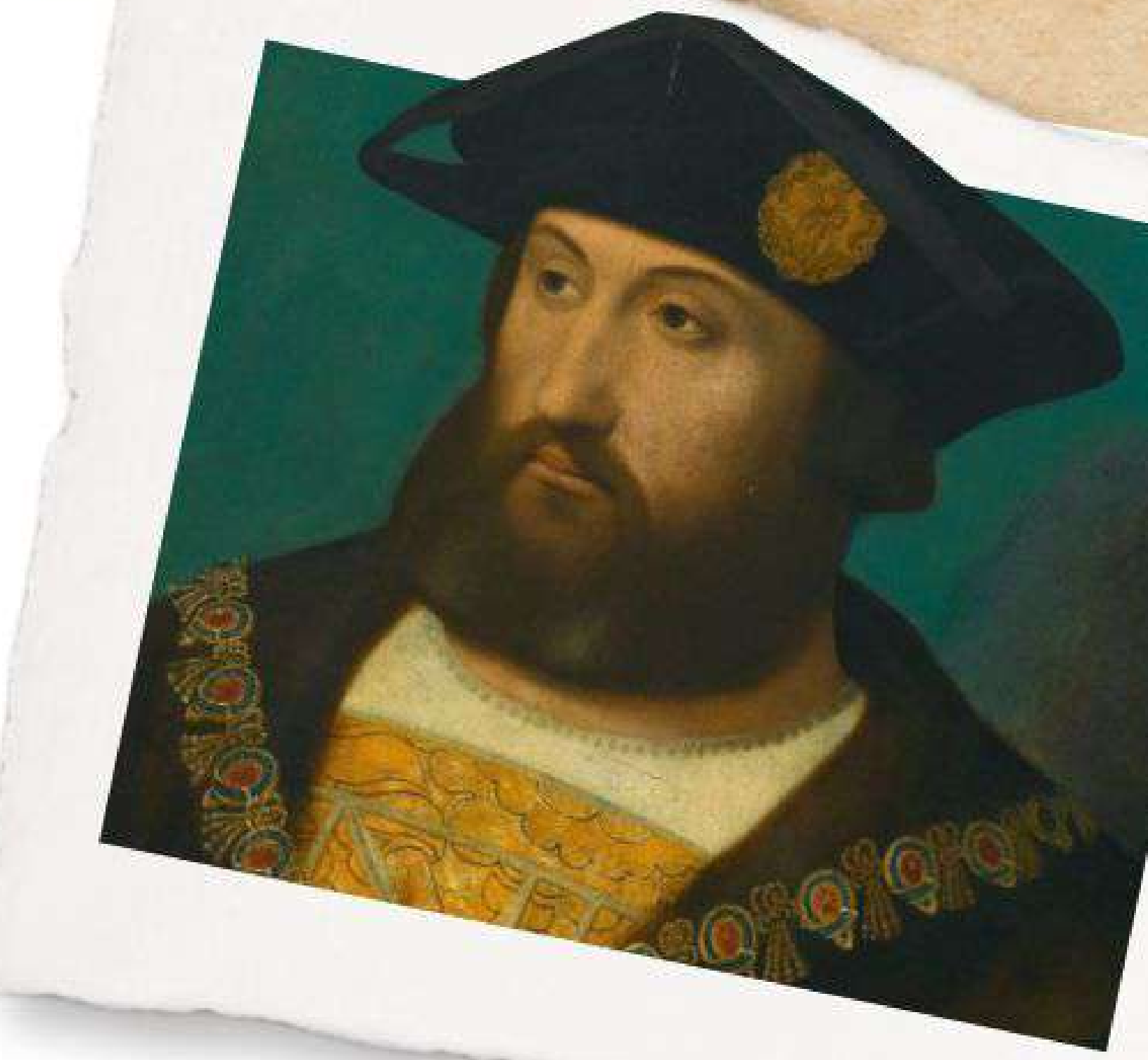
THOMAS MORE

God's martyr

b.1478-d.1535

Friend or Foe? Foe

When Wolsey fell from glory, More replaced him as lord chancellor. But in 1530, he refused to sign a letter asking the pope to annul the king's marriage. He also declined to sign the Oath of Supremacy, which accepted Henry as supreme head of the Church of England. In May 1542, he resigned with no repercussions but when he didn't attend Anne's coronation, his fate was sealed. He was charged with treason after admitting to meeting with Elizabeth Barton, a nun who had prophesied the king would meet an early end for his divorce. He avoided standing trial but in 1534 he was asked to swear allegiance to the Act of Succession, which made Anne's daughter heir to the throne. He refused. It took the jury just 15 minutes to find him guilty and he was executed on 6 July 1535.



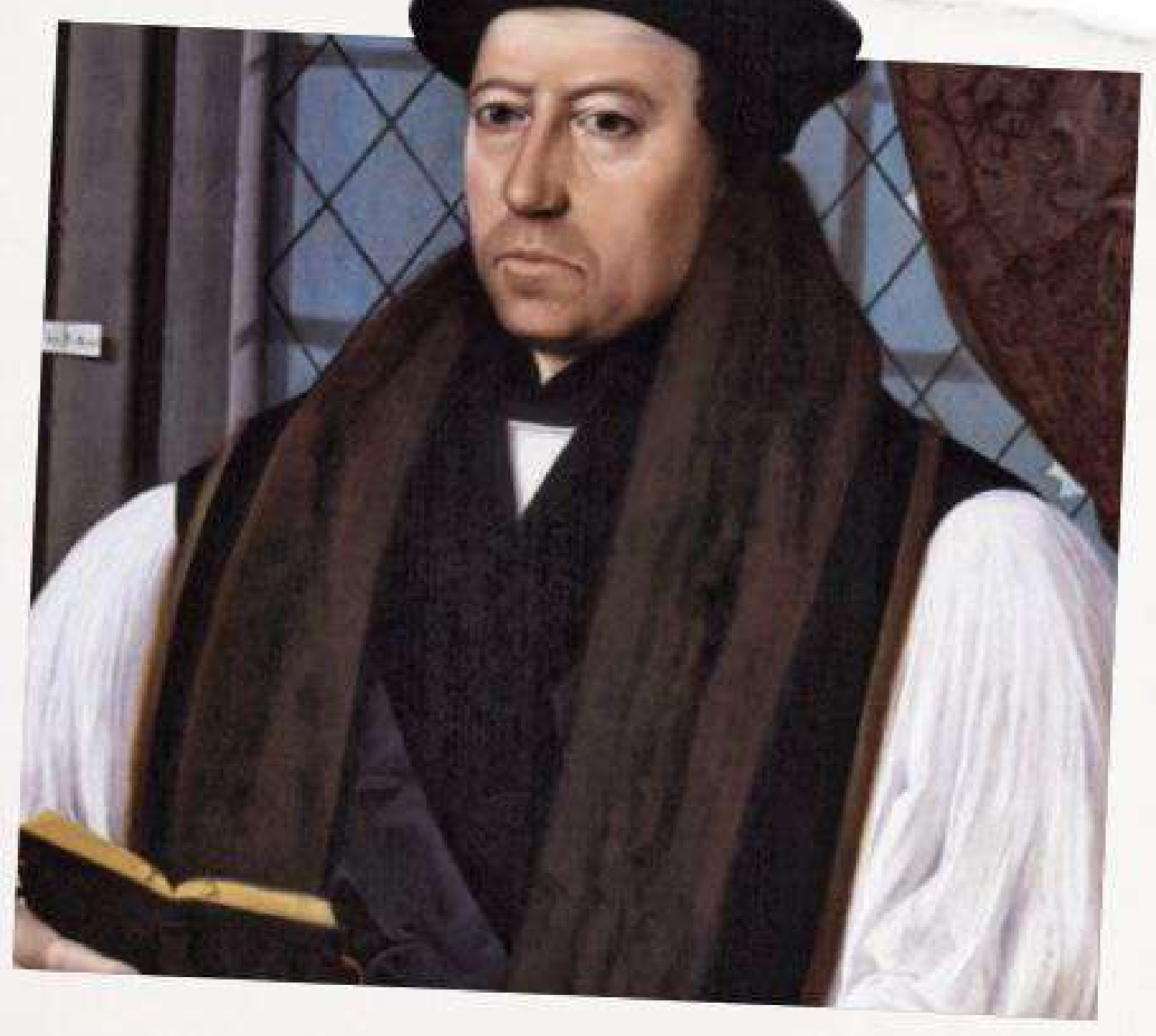
CHARLES BRANDON

Learning lessons the hard way

b.1485-d.1545

Friend or Foe? Foe

In the mid-1520s, Brandon remained Henry's close friend and adviser, but that was all to change when the king fell for Anne Boleyn. For some time, Brandon had not seen eye to eye with Anne's family. He became acutely aware that the rise of the Boleyn family would mean less power for himself and voiced his concerns about the marriage to Henry himself, even accusing Anne of an affair with the poet Thomas Wyatt. Brandon was briefly banished from court and following the marriage in early 1533, Norfolk demanded that Brandon relinquish the office of earl marshal – a post he had held since 1524. Henry agreed. Realising that he was better off keeping his mouth shut, he spoke no further on the matter, and even acted as lord high steward at Anne's coronation, carrying her crown.



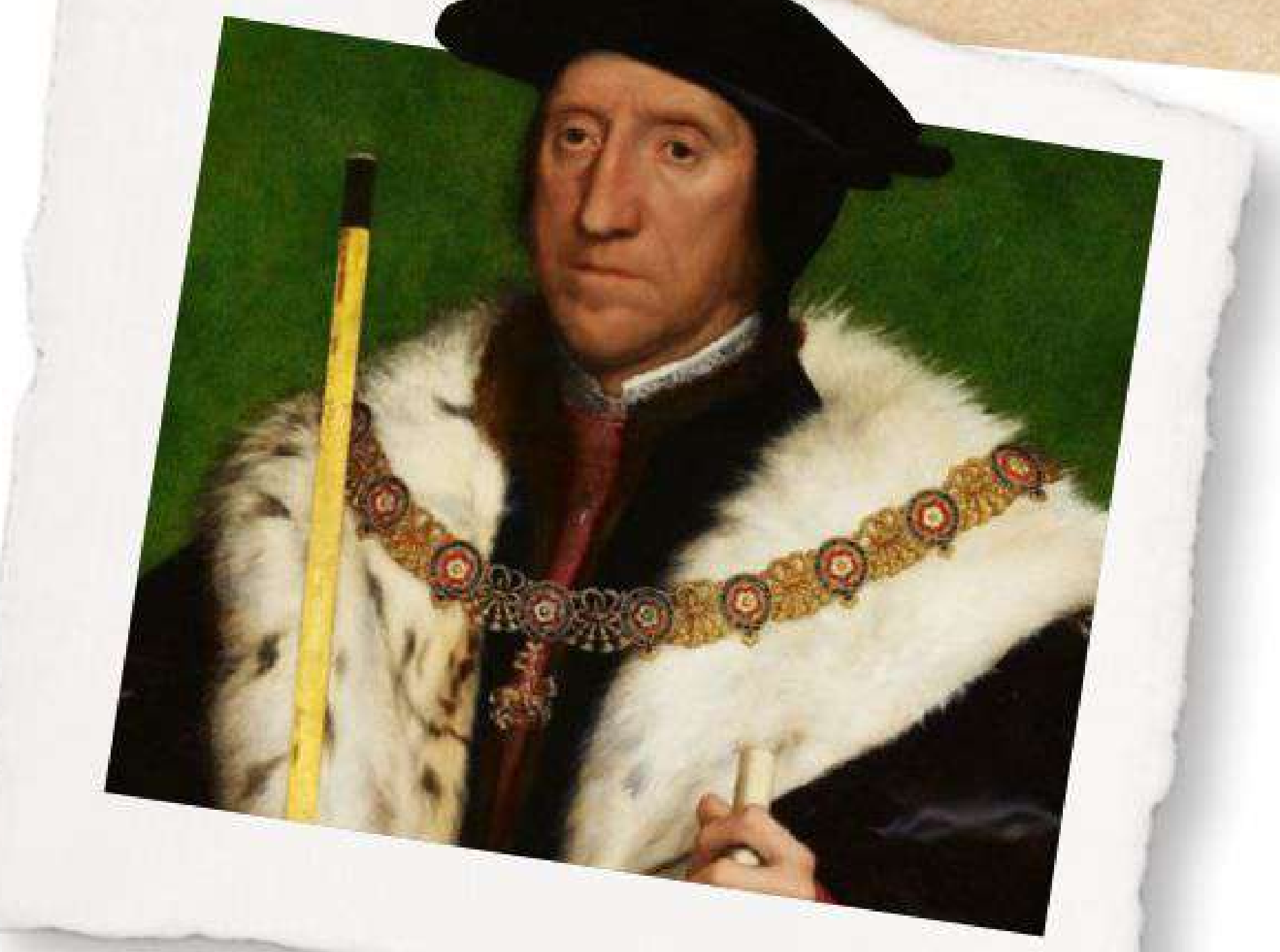
THOMAS CRANMER

Setting a new priestly precedent

b.1489-d.1556

Friend or Foe? Friend

When Wolsey was tasked with securing an annulment between King Henry and Catherine, he began consulting university experts. Cranmer was one of those interviewed. From 1527, he assisted with the proceedings and in 1529, he presented Henry with a plan to focus on seeking opinions from university theologians in Europe. Henry approved, and Cranmer was sent to Europe to conduct the research. During his time abroad, he passed through the town of Nuremberg, where he met one of the Reformation leaders, Andreas Osiander. His Lutheran sympathies were becoming clear. On 1 October 1532, he was appointed archbishop of Canterbury and returned to England. The following May, he announced that Henry's marriage to Catherine was against the law of God and validated his marriage to Anne.



THOMAS HOWARD

The plot to seduce the king

b.1473-d.1554

Friend or Foe? Friend

If speculation is to be believed, it was the duke of Norfolk who engineered the affair between his niece Anne Boleyn and Henry. He had seen at her debut in 1522 how men had ogled at this beautiful, intelligent woman. He had also seen how frustrated Henry was becoming with his current wife's failure to produce a male heir and how easily he strayed from her side. If he could persuade Anne to seduce the king, his family's position would be elevated to the highest level, and his own power would be infallible. Norfolk's plot was successful and by 1529 matters of state were increasingly being handled by himself and the rest of the Boleyn family. Following Cardinal Wolsey's fall in 1530, Norfolk became the king's leading councillor, and played a key role in the annulment proceedings.

The Forbidden Queen

Follow the romantic beginning of the love affair that rocked the very foundations of England itself

Words FRANCES WHITE

The sun streamed down on the brisk spring morning as a figure emerged near from four-turreted White Tower of the Tower of London. The crowd that had gathered there were oddly quiet; they watched silently as the slender woman passed through them. She was dressed in a loose, grey gown, so dark it was almost black, with a red petticoat underneath. An ermine mantle was draped around her neck, and her long dark hair was tied above her head, exposing her thin, dainty neck. Two of her ladies accompanied her as she climbed the scaffold that had been erected for the day's sombre event. Her steps were strong and firm, her countenance steely and unreadable.

Although the strength of her steps was remarkable for one facing her death, when she turned to the crowd and spoke her voice trembled. However, her words rang out loud and clear. She begged the people to forgive her if she had not treated them with gentleness, and then prayed that God would have mercy for those who had condemned her. She ended by praying for the king, who was a good, gentle, and sovereign lord. All these things she uttered, but not once did she admit her guilt for the crimes she would die for. Her words were so sweet, her manner so graceful, that many gathered there shed a tear for the condemned woman.

She wished farewell to her weeping ladies, and removed her headdress, tucking her long, thick hair under a coif. As she knelt upright, one of her ladies came forward and tied a blindfold over her eyes. She began to mutter under her breath "Jesu receive my soul; O Lord God have pity on my soul", over and over again. She prayed silently as she received her husband's final gift, a swordsman of Saint-Omer; he had given her the mercy of a sword in place of an axe. The executioner raised the sword high, its sharpened blade gleaming in the sunlight, then brought it down upon her thin neck. It was all over in a single stroke. The queen was dead.

It is portrayed, often unfairly, that Anne Boleyn descended on King Henry VIII like some sort of wicked, conniving temptress, luring him away with her dark looks and feminine charms from his almost 24-year-long marriage, young daughter and queen beloved by the population. But Henry had been anything but loyal to Catherine, and had already fathered his illegitimate son Henry Fitzroy before Anne was in the picture. In fact, it had been Anne's sister, Mary, who initially caught the king's attention, and he conducted an affair with the older Boleyn sister that may have resulted in two more

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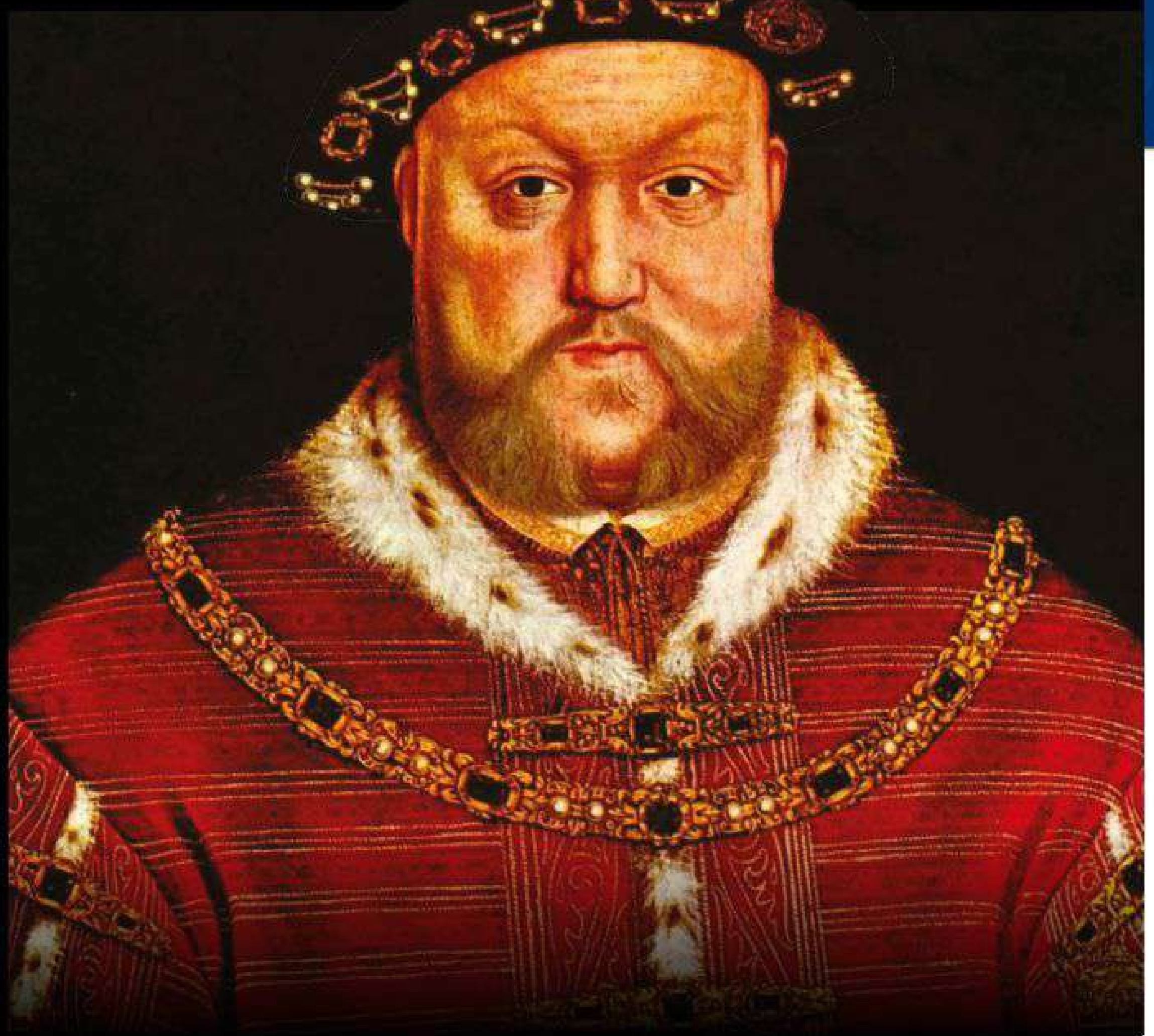
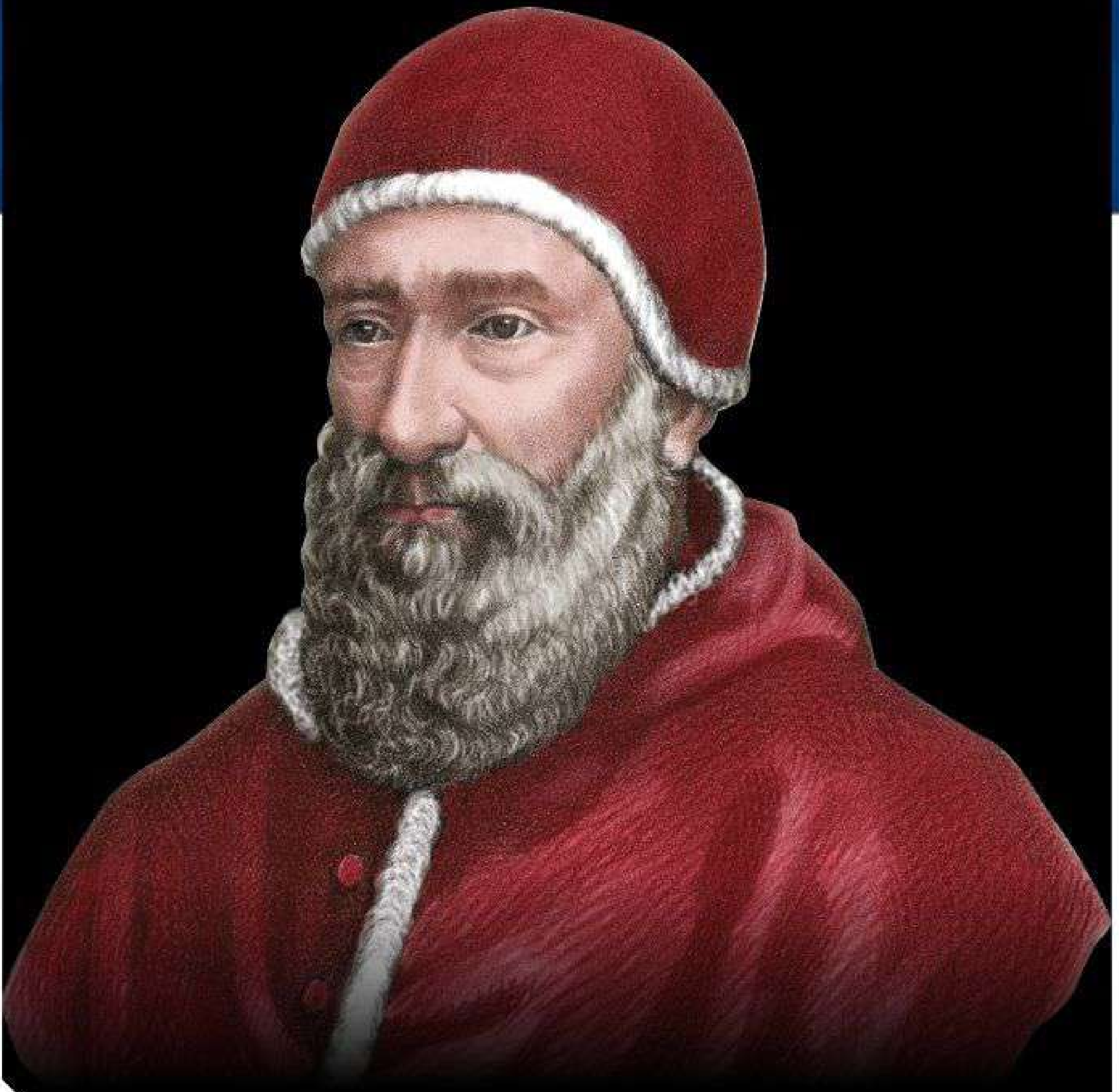
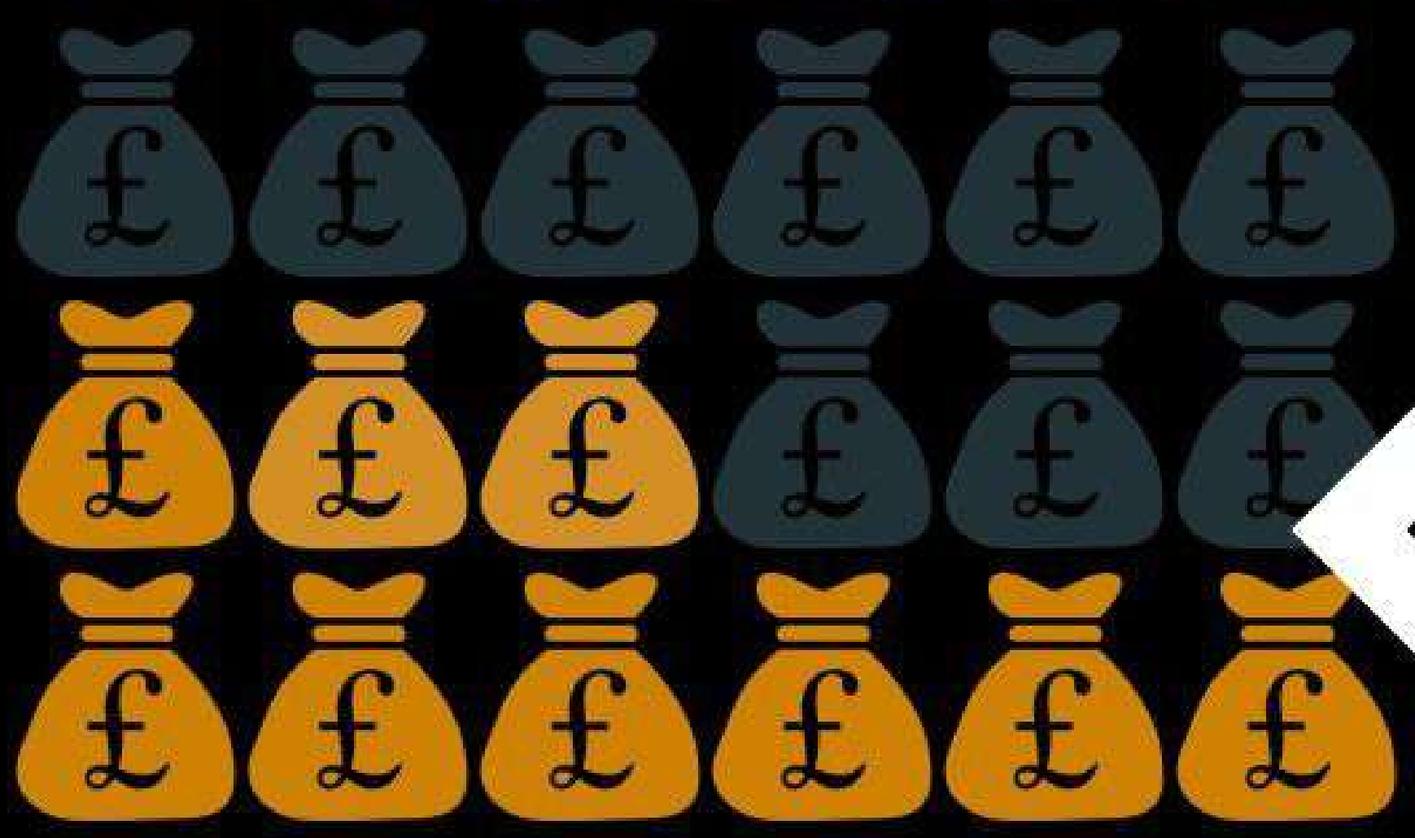
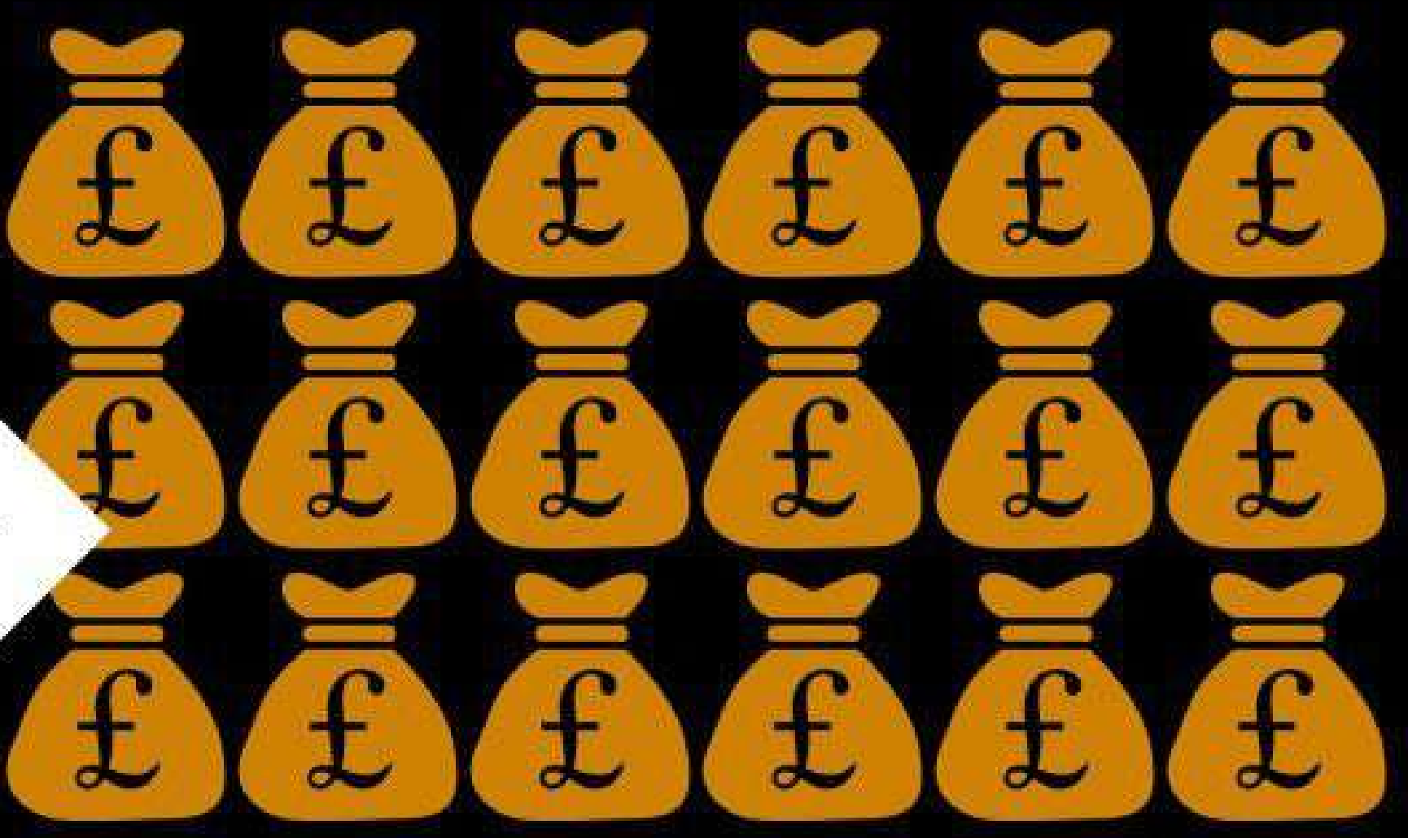
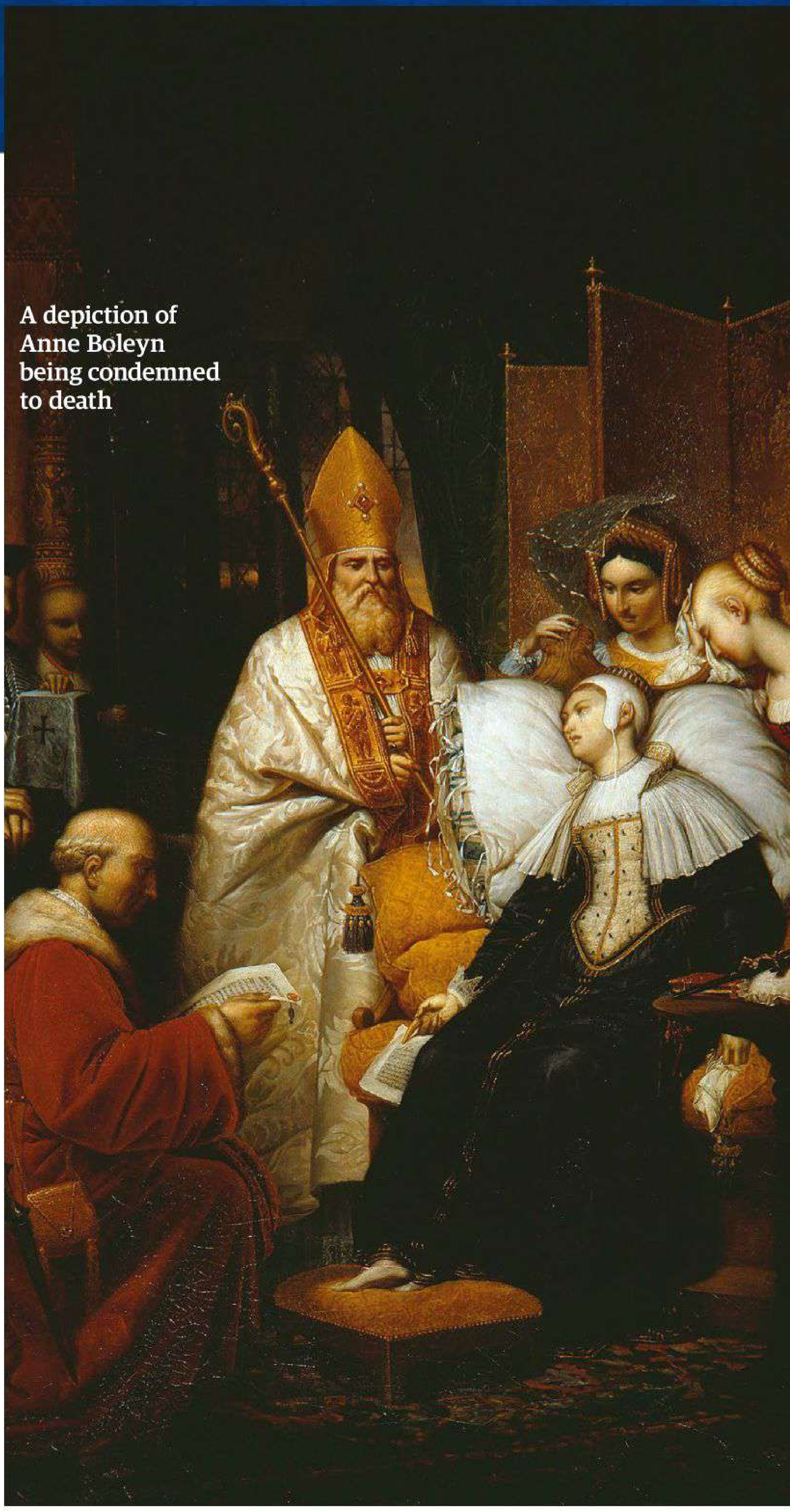




V	**Crown** King Henry VIII	**Church** Pope Clement VII
NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS	**2 MILLION**	OVER **75 MILLION**
WEALTH		
ON DIVORCE	"If a man shall take his brother's wife it is an unclean thing... they shall be childless" King Henry VIII quoting the *Bible*, Leviticus, 20:21, as justification for seeking a divorce from Catherine of Aragon	"Forbids Henry to remarry until the decision of the case, and declares that if he does all issue will be illegitimate"
DRESS SENSE	PURPLE VELVET, **ITALIAN AND FRENCH FASHION,** LARGE PUFFED SLEEVES, **FEATHERED HAT,** FUR MANTLE, **MULTIPLE EXPENSIVE PIECES OF JEWELLERY**	STRICT POPE ATTIRE, **CHOIR DRESS – A WHITE SILK CASSOCK,** SCULL CAP AND A LACE ROCHET
ON RELIGION	"For all the prelates at their consecration make an oath to the Pope clean contrary to the oath that they make to us, so that they seem to be his subjects, and not ours"	"Forbids any one in England, universities, parliaments, courts of law, etc, to make any decision in an affair the judgment of which is reserved for the Holy See"



A depiction of Anne Boleyn being condemned to death

Hever Castle was the childhood home of Anne Boleyn

Tudor Courtship

Get set up

As forced marriage is forbidden by the Church, marriages can't strictly be 'arranged', but couples are often matched up by their parents to ensure a suitor of acceptable social standing. Love matches do occur, but are only really acceptable if the wealth of both is suitable.

Shower her in gifts

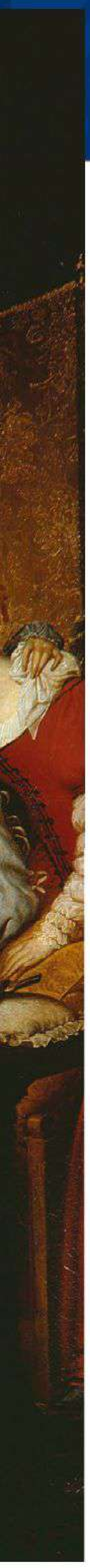
Once a suitable lady has been chosen, a Tudor gentleman will begin the first stage of courtship in which he will visit her frequently and bestow her with an array of valuable gifts to win her over. Ribbons, girdles and gloves can all be used to capture a lady's heart.

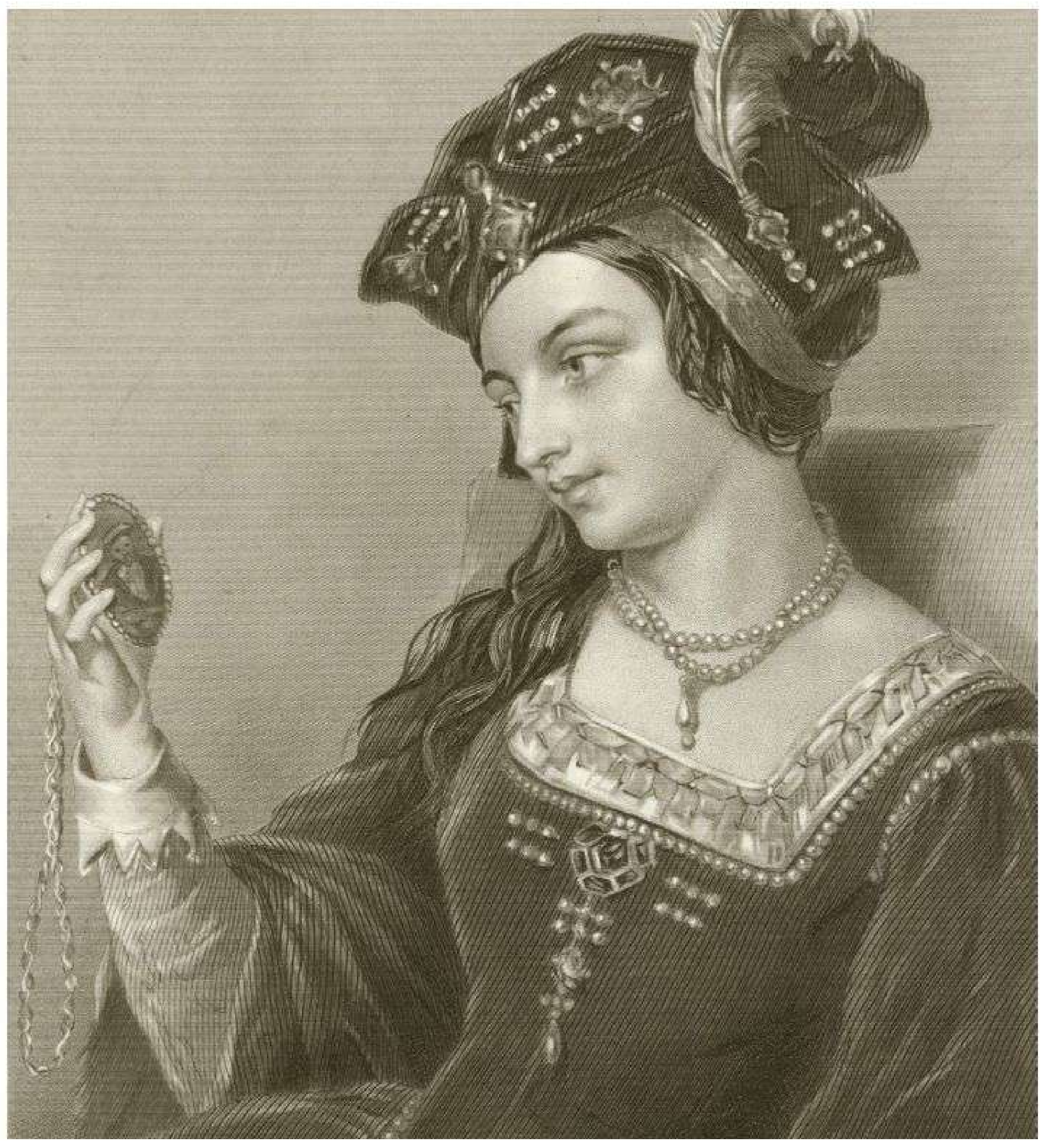
Show your commitment

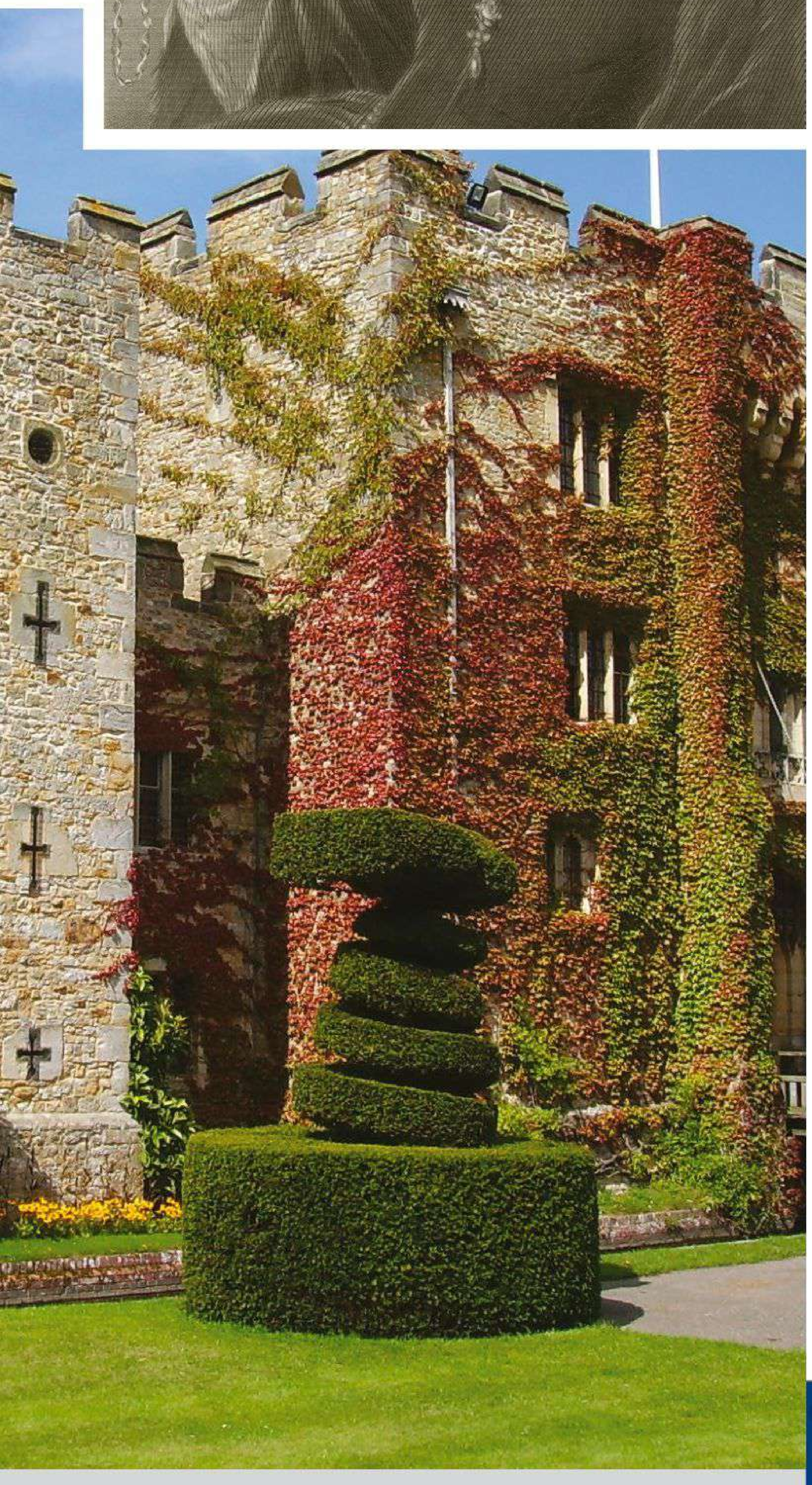
Known as betrothal or handfasting, when the couple have agreed to marry they will go through a period similar to a modern-day engagement. This often involves a public ceremony where pledges are made. After the betrothal the couple are allowed to begin sexual relations.

Get married

The marriage ceremony itself is a very public and high-profile affair in a church with the more guests the better. Wedding dresses will usually be the bride's best dress and, for those who can afford it, the ceremony will be followed by a great feast with food, music and dancing.







children. When Henry was first drawn to Anne, it is highly likely that he desired her simply as another mistress. But she had other plans.

The new lady in waiting was a captivating figure. Having recently returned from serving the French Queen Claude, she boasted an elegance and poise that instantly created a stir. Her dark features were unfashionable for the time, but her deep brown eyes and unusual beauty caught the attention of more than just the king. Among those competing for her affections were Sir Thomas Wyatt, an acclaimed poet, and Henry Percy, who even went as far as to secure Anne's hand in a secret betrothal. However, all those with their gaze fixed upon the enchanting young debutante soon found themselves facing a rival they could not hope to better – the king of England.

Henry prided himself on his image – he was obsessed with his appearance and was constantly attempting to prove himself as an accomplished, charismatic and capable leader. With his own claim to the throne emerging from the turbulent Wars of the Roses, he was determined to do everything in his power to secure his and his descendant's place as king. As models of the Renaissance man, Henry had a friendly rivalry with Francis I of France and did anything he could do to outmatch him.

Anne was trained at the French courts herself, and boasted all the glamour, exceptional skills and intelligence Henry wished to embody himself. He wanted her instantly.

However, unlike her sister, Anne was not a weak-willed girl who would bow to the will of a man. Anne's courtly education in the royal palaces of the Netherlands and France had given her grace, elegance and a beautiful singing voice – but it had also given her one other thing: knowledge of the game of courtly love. She knew what became of the mistresses of kings; she had witnessed her own sister tossed aside the moment his attention had been drawn by another. She had already been denied the love of her sweetheart, Henry Percy, having been deemed unworthy by his father. Henry's obvious affections for her would provide the perfect opportunity to prove just how much she was worth. Anne did something no woman before her had dared to do: she said no to the king.

> "Anne knew what became of the mistresses of kings; she had witnessed her own sister tossed aside"

Rather than outraging him, Anne's rejection spurred Henry to chase her more fervently. He bestowed her with gifts, penned love letter after love letter, but the enchanting but strong-willed woman still said no. When he offered for her to be his official mistress, that too was rejected. She was everything all the women in his life had never been – rather than agreeing politely, she challenged his opinions, debating with him on subjects such as theology. She was passionate, brash and fiery, and she had well and truly set Henry alight. There was no doubt in his mind that such a young, virile woman would bear him the male heir that would ensure the continuation of his line. Sometime in 1527, after a year of chasing her, he proposed marriage to Anne, and finally she said yes. While we have reams of Henry's love letters, and the extreme decisions that would follow his proposal as evidence of his strong feelings for Anne, we can only speculate on what was going on in the young woman's head. She was under immense pressure from her ambitious father and uncle to elevate the family name – something a match with a king would no doubt achieve – but the lengths to which Henry would go to ensure she became queen must have been captivating for the younger daughter of a family with commoner roots. Because Henry did indeed have great lengths to travel, there was the small matter of his current wife, the now-infertile Catherine of Aragon.

Henry, at least in the early part of his reign, was well known as a devout Catholic. He had even been named a so-called 'defender of the faith' by Pope Leo X, and it was to the Bible he turned to seek an annulment for his 24-year-long marriage to the mother of his only legitimate child to date. He argued with Pope Clement VII that his marriage to Catherine, who had been his late brother's wife, directly went against the words in Leviticus 20:21. But the Pope wasn't a fool; to allow the annulment would contradict the decision made by a previous infallible Pope to allow the marriage between Henry and Catherine in the first place. Again Henry was told no and again he was denied Anne and the male heir he so badly desired.

Henry had heard enough 'nos' so on 23 May 1533 he took matters into his own hands and ordered the newly elected and specially selected archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, to grant him the annulment he so desperately needed. That simple action would have consequences that would reach far beyond Henry or Anne's own life, forever changing the religious and political landscape of the country, leading to the English Reformation. Breaking away from Rome was a rash, dangerous and groundbreaking move, but Henry finally had what he wanted – he was allowed to marry the enchanting Anne. And it was just in time, because she was already pregnant, and any child born out of wedlock could not be king.

Anne was paraded through the streets of London in a grand ceremony; she sat upon swathes of fine cloth resting on two regal horses. She was crowned with St Edward's crown, a crown only worn previously by monarchs, perhaps indicating the male heir she was presumed to carry in her belly. Anne's family immediately felt the boons of their new powerful connection. Her father became Earl of Wiltshire, her cousin Earl of Ormond and even Mary, Henry's previous mistress, received an annual pension of £100. Spirits in the royal court were high, but beyond the palace gates the public were unconvinced. In their eyes not only had Anne ousted a beloved queen, but she was also responsible for the ripples created after the break with Rome; the people needed something stable to place their hopes in – they needed a male heir.

They would have to wait. On 7 September 1533 Anne gave birth, but it was not to the son she had expected. It was a daughter. She was christened 'Elizabeth' in honour of Henry's mother, but this did little to comfort his disappointment. The documents were changed, the tournament that celebrated the birth of an heir cancelled and the people's discontent grew. Doubts began to grow in Henry's mind; not only had Anne failed to produce the male heir she had promised him, but also the qualities that had made the young Boleyn girl so enchanting and desirable as a mistress were proving unsuitable for the wife of a king.

After being married to Catherine of Aragon for so long, Henry was used to having an obedient, reliable and submissive wife. Anne was anything but this. She would openly speak her mind and express opinions contrary to Henry's. Catherine had silently watched as Henry indulged himself with various mistresses beneath her nose, but Anne reacted with extreme jealousy toward any woman that got close to him, as she herself was aware how easily her husband's gaze could travel. He had sacrificed his faith and rocked the very foundations of the country for her, but now Henry was not so sure about Anne, and neither was anyone else.

The pressure on Anne at this point was immeasurable. She was desperate to cling to power, not only for herself, but for the good of her family and her daughter, and her only chance of keeping a grasp on it relied on something completely out of her control. Sadly for Anne, the pressure upon her was not about to ease up, and she suffered a miscarriage just one year into her tenure as queen. Fate itself seemed positioned against her when again in 1536 she miscarried another baby, this time a boy. For Henry, and many others, there was more than fate at work here, and he accused Anne of seducing him with spells. The fact she was unable to bear a healthy son was, apparently, further proof that Anne was cursed. Considering the public's already poor opinion of her, it would not take much for them to believe that Anne was a harbinger of ill omens and quite possibly a witch sent to lead their king and country astray. Not only was she disobedient, fiery and opinionated, but she was also unable to produce a future king. Everyone was in agreement – Anne needed to go.

As Anne recovered from her miscarriage, Thomas Cromwell, Henry's chief minister, set about plotting her downfall. Cromwell had his own reasons to fear the influence of Anne; the two had argued where the money from the dissolution of the monasteries should go, and he had seen where Anne had sent her other enemies, such as Air Thomas More – to the chopping block.

English Reformation in numbers

1 in 50 was in religious orders

800

religious houses taken over by Henry

10,000

monks, nuns, friars and canons lost their homes

£84,324,100

The amount the crown profited per year as a result of the Reformation

200

The years the monarchy had been trying to suppress religious power

30,000

The number of people who took part in the Pilgrimage of Grace against the Reformation

The highs and lows of Anne Boleyn

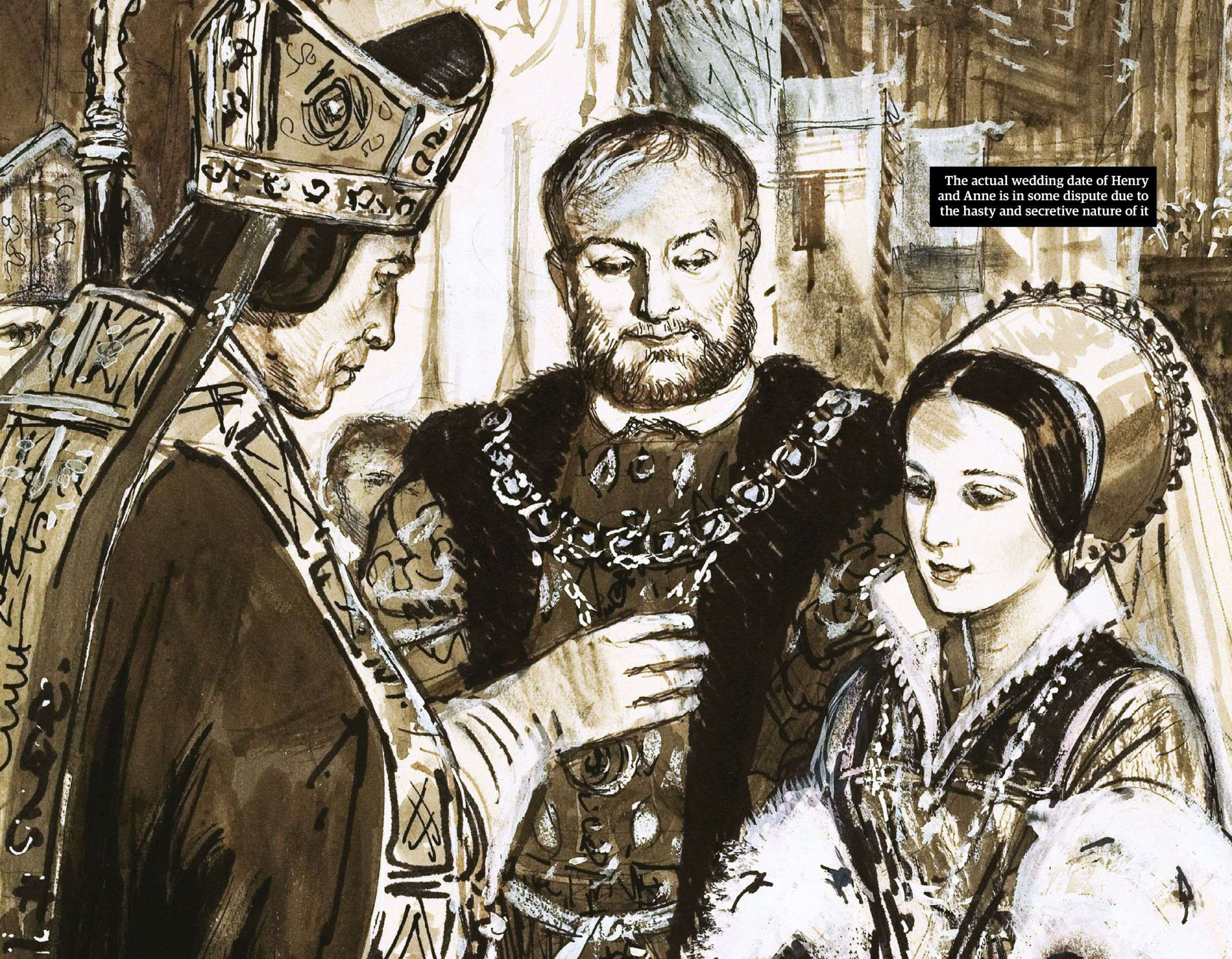
1501
Anne is born to Thomas Boleyn and Lady Elizabeth Howard, the second daughter born to the couple after Mary. The Boleyns are a very respected family of the English aristocracy. The date of Anne's birth is also argued to be 1507.

1513
Anne is sent abroad to receive an education in Europe and joins the schoolroom of Margaret of Austria. Here she learns all the skills expected of a Tudor noblewoman, such as horseback riding, dancing, singing and writing.

1515
Anne becomes maid of honour to Queen Claude of France. Here she develops many of the skills that will later impress the king, such as art, fashion, etiquette and most importantly, the game of courtly love.

1522
Anne's father summons her back to England to marry James Butler to settle a dispute over land and titles. The marriage arrangements come to a sudden halt, possibly because Thomas Boleyn has a grander suitor in mind for his youngest daughter.

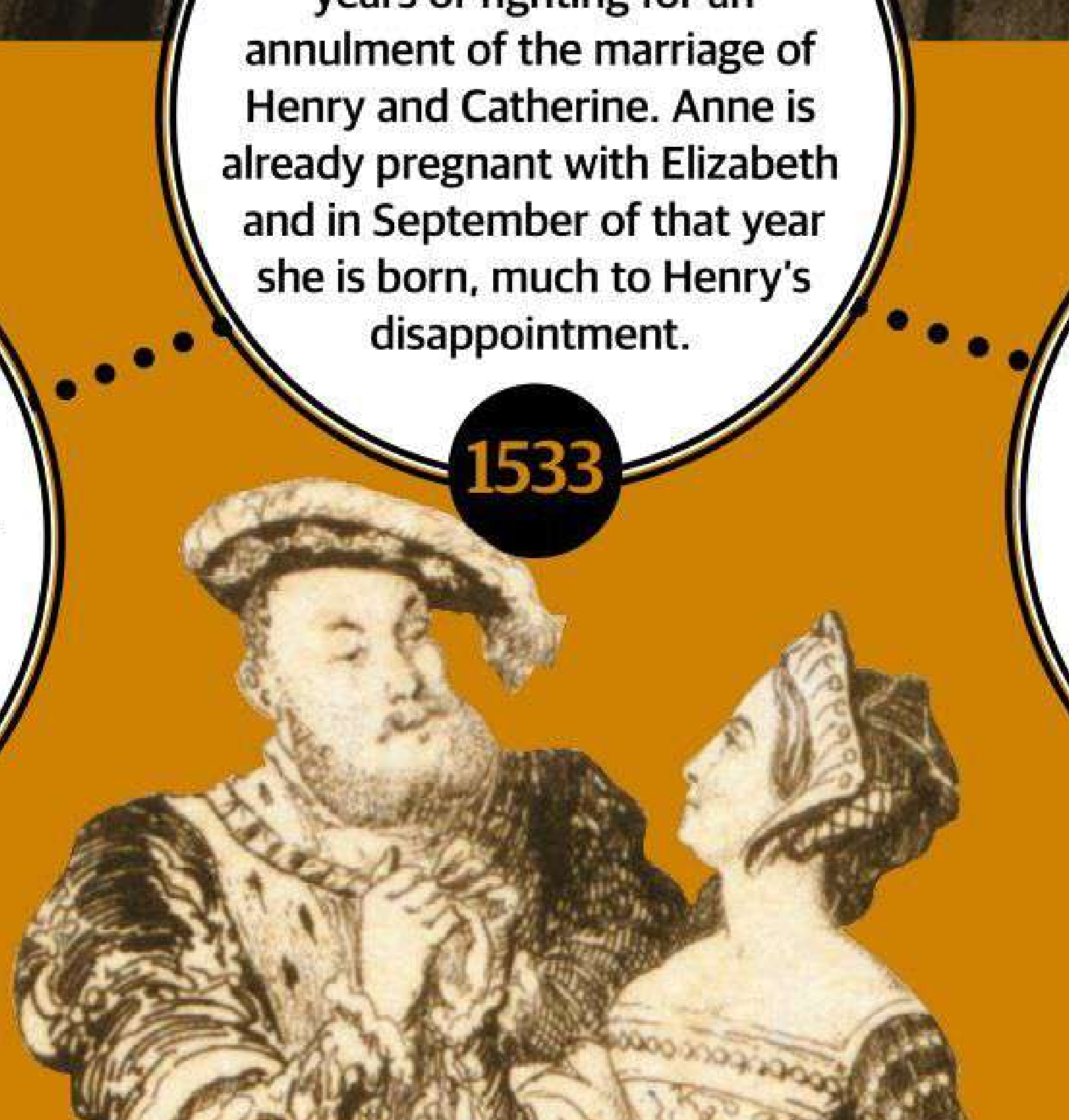
1522
Anne makes her debut at the Chateau Vert pageant. She attracts the attention of Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Henry Percy. She later secretly betroths Percy, but it is cut off by his father and Anne enters into the service of Catherine of Aragon.



The actual wedding date of Henry and Anne is in some dispute due to the hasty and secretive nature of it

1526

Henry VIII loses interest in Anne's sister, Mary, and begins to court Anne. He sends her a series of love letters, but Anne refuses to be his mistress. Within a year Henry asks Anne to marry him and she accepts.



1533

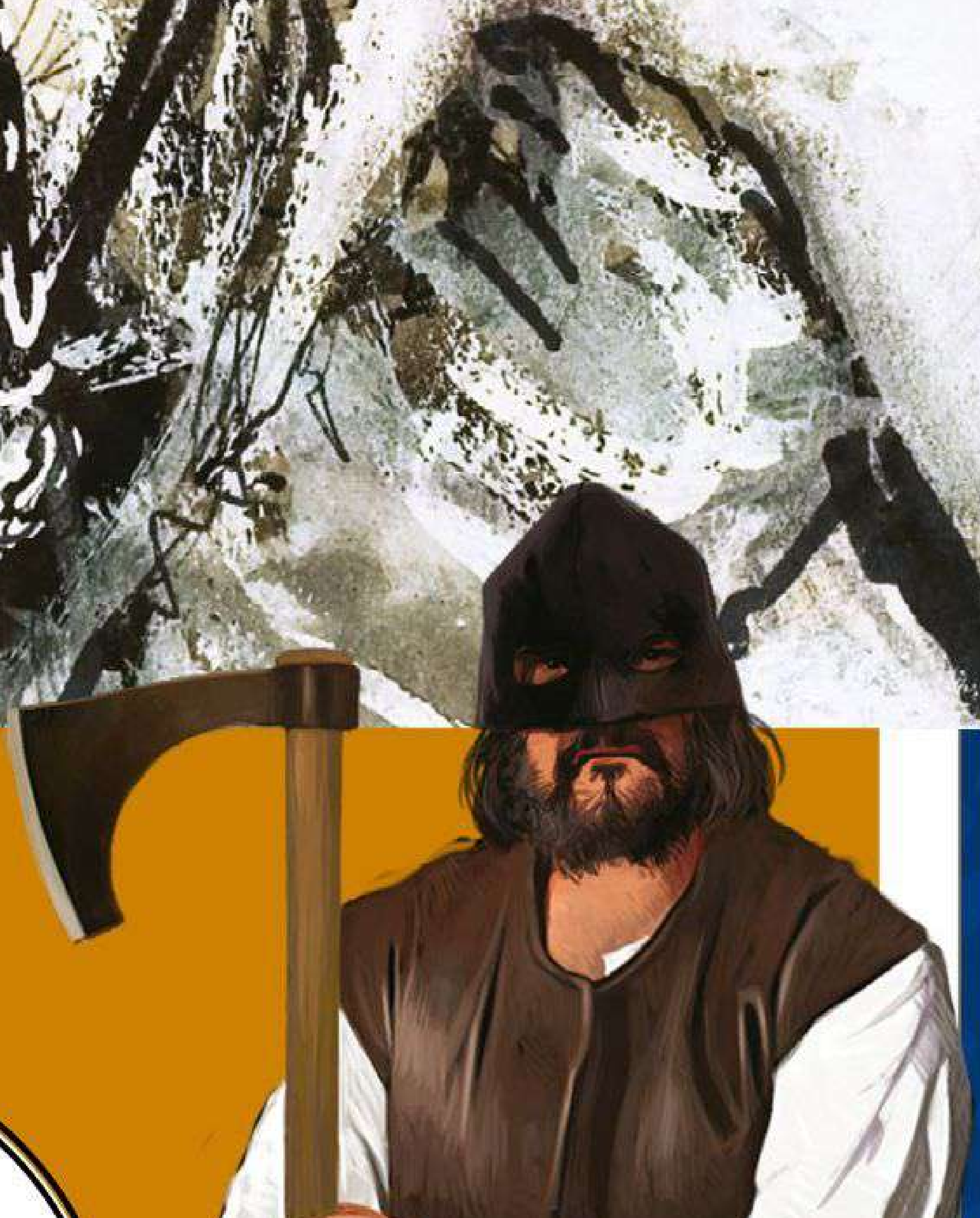
Anne is crowned queen consort, after years of fighting for an annulment of the marriage of Henry and Catherine. Anne is already pregnant with Elizabeth and in September of that year she is born, much to Henry's disappointment.

1534

The relationship between Anne and Henry becomes strained as Anne suffers a miscarriage. By the time she falls pregnant again in 1535, Henry is already courting Jane Seymour. Anne also miscarries this child, who appears to be male.

1536

Various men are arrested on charges of adultery with Anne and treason against the king in a plot masterminded by Thomas Cromwell. Anne is taken to the Tower of London, tried and found guilty of adultery, incest and high treason.



1536

Anne is executed on a scaffold by a French swordsman brought in especially for the beheading. Before her death she praises Henry, perhaps to save Elizabeth and her family from any further implications, but refuses to admit her guilt.

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Thomas Cromwell

The wolf of Wolf Hall

How a Putney-born pauper rose to the rank of the king's closest confidante

Words DEREK WILSON

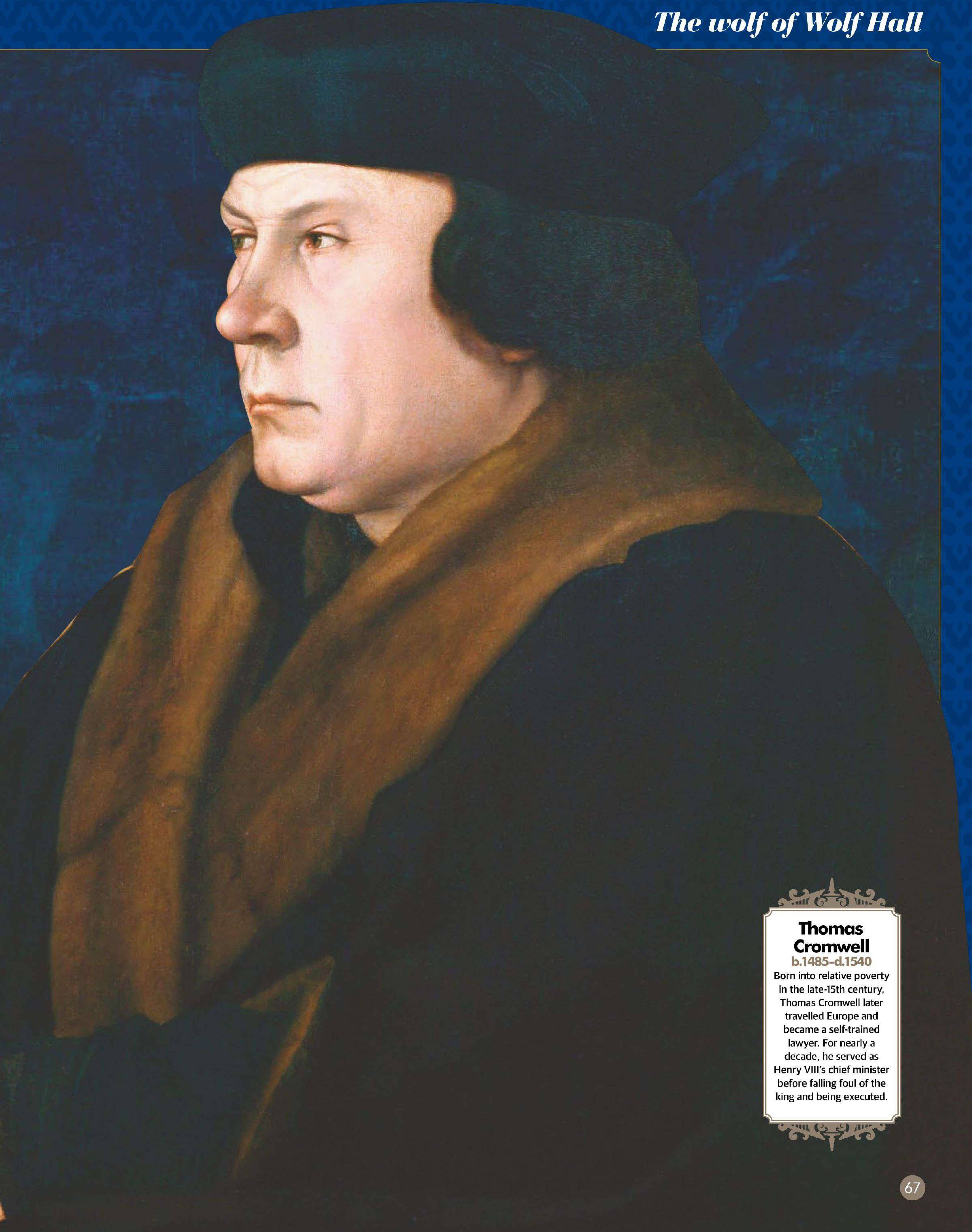
Within the space of a single decade - between 1530 and 1540 - one man changed the identity and destiny of England for all time. Traditionally that man has been identified as Henry VIII. However, now we know that the driving force behind the Reformation was Thomas Cromwell.

But who was he? Despite the flurry of biographies and novels, as well as a TV serial about Cromwell, do we really know him? He was certainly something of a mystery to his contemporaries. He appeared suddenly at the king's right hand, prompting observers to enquire into his background. They drew a blank. Cromwell was, apparently, very reticent in talking about his past. This led to the circulation of rumours and even to the invention of stories about him. As a result, we have very little factual information about one of the major political forces in English history. Cromwell lived for about 55 years, and yet we know virtually nothing about the first 40 of those.

However, we should not give way to total despair. What we can do is take the few scraps of information we do have and locate them as accurately as possible within the tapestry of the European Renaissance and Reformation. When we do that, what springs to view is a picture of an extraordinary, passionate genius whose thinking was shaped in the intellectual workshops of Italy and the Netherlands, and who brought to his native land many of the cultural innovations that were transforming life on the continent.

Thomas's childhood was spent at Putney, ten kilometres up-river from Westminster. His father was a local businessman who had his fingers in several pies. He was an innkeeper, fuller and blacksmith, and a minor landowner. Thomas was the only boy and the youngest member of the family. His eldest sister, Catherine, was married to a local lawyer, Morgan Williams, and it was the Williams side of the family that prospered spectacularly during the early Tudor years. Morgan Williams moved to Greenwich, where one of the royal palaces was located, and cultivated influential friends at court. By 1518, he was able to marry his son, Richard, to Frances Murfyn, who was the daughter of no less a personage than Thomas Murfyn, lord mayor of London.

Visiting his sister's home and meeting members of fashionable London society can scarcely have failed to stir ambition in Thomas Cromwell. As the only son in the family he would have been expected to follow his father's business. This had so little appeal to the spirited teenager that he ran away from home. This is where the racy



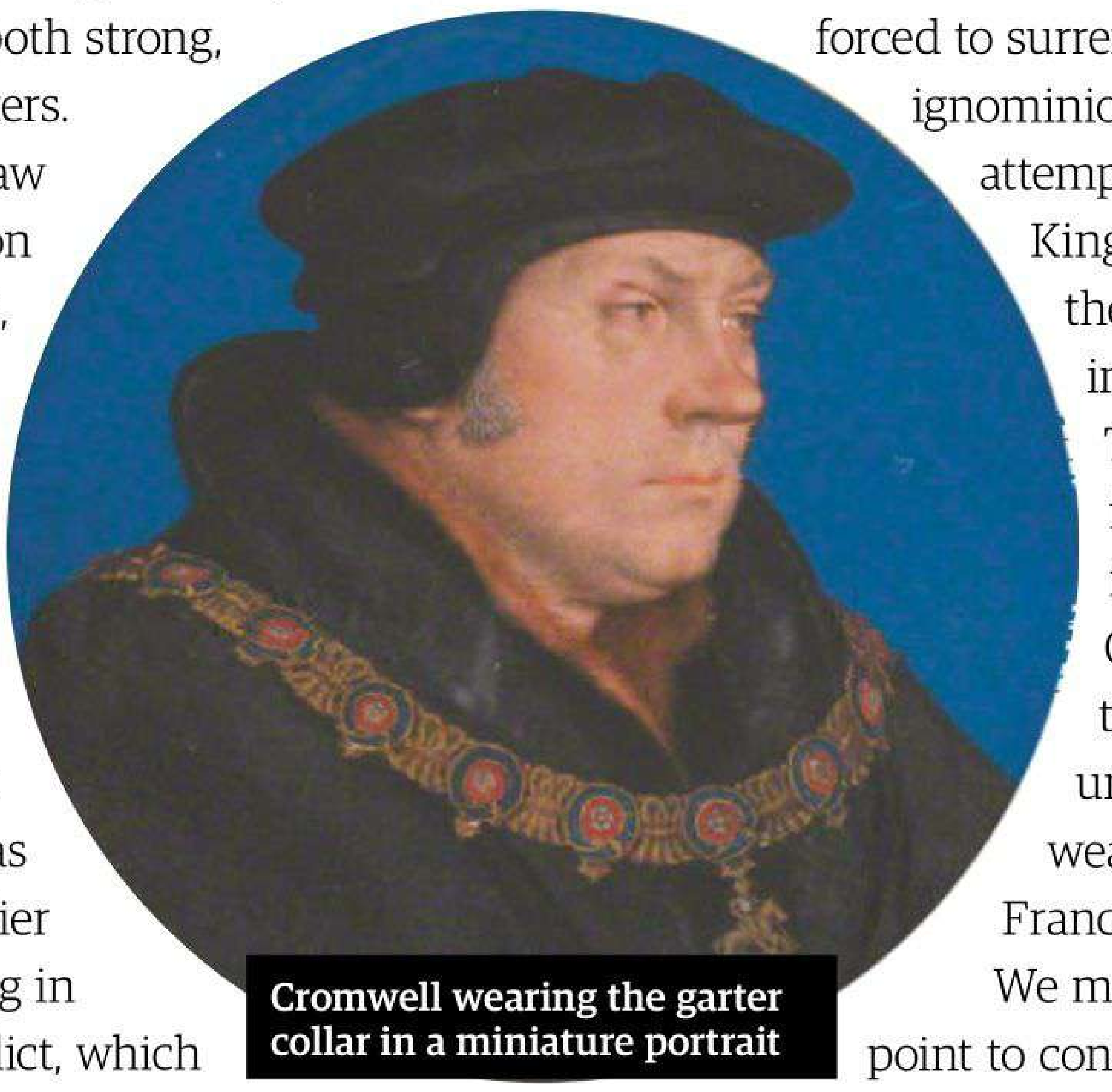
Thomas Cromwell

b.1485-d.1540

Born into relative poverty in the late-15th century, Thomas Cromwell later travelled Europe and became a self-trained lawyer. For nearly a decade, he served as Henry VIII's chief minister before falling foul of the king and being executed.

legends about him begin. Matteo Bandello, a contemporary writer of picaresque moral tales similar to Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, claimed that Cromwell had confided to him that he left Putney fuggendo da mio padre ('fleeing from my father'). Walter and Thomas were both strong, not to say ruthless, characters. The father fell foul of the law more than once and the son later admitted to his friend, Archbishop Cranmer, that in his youth he had been "a bit of a ruffian".

According to Bandello, it was the military life that first attracted Cromwell. We are told that the boy attached himself, as a page or servant, to a soldier in the French army fighting in the Italian Wars. This conflict, which dragged on for decades, was a contest between the kings of France and Spain for control of central Italy. The only fixed date this source offers is 28 December 1503. Cromwell, Bandello says, was present at the Battle of Garigliano, fought in marshy ground some 60 kilometres north of Naples. After a dismal engagement in the cold and wet terrain, the French retreated to the port of Gaeta, hoping for reinforcements.


Cromwell wearing the garter collar in a miniature portrait

None came and, after several days, they were forced to surrender. This was the ignominious end of France's attempt to overrun the Kingdom of Naples, which, thereafter, would remain in Spanish hands.

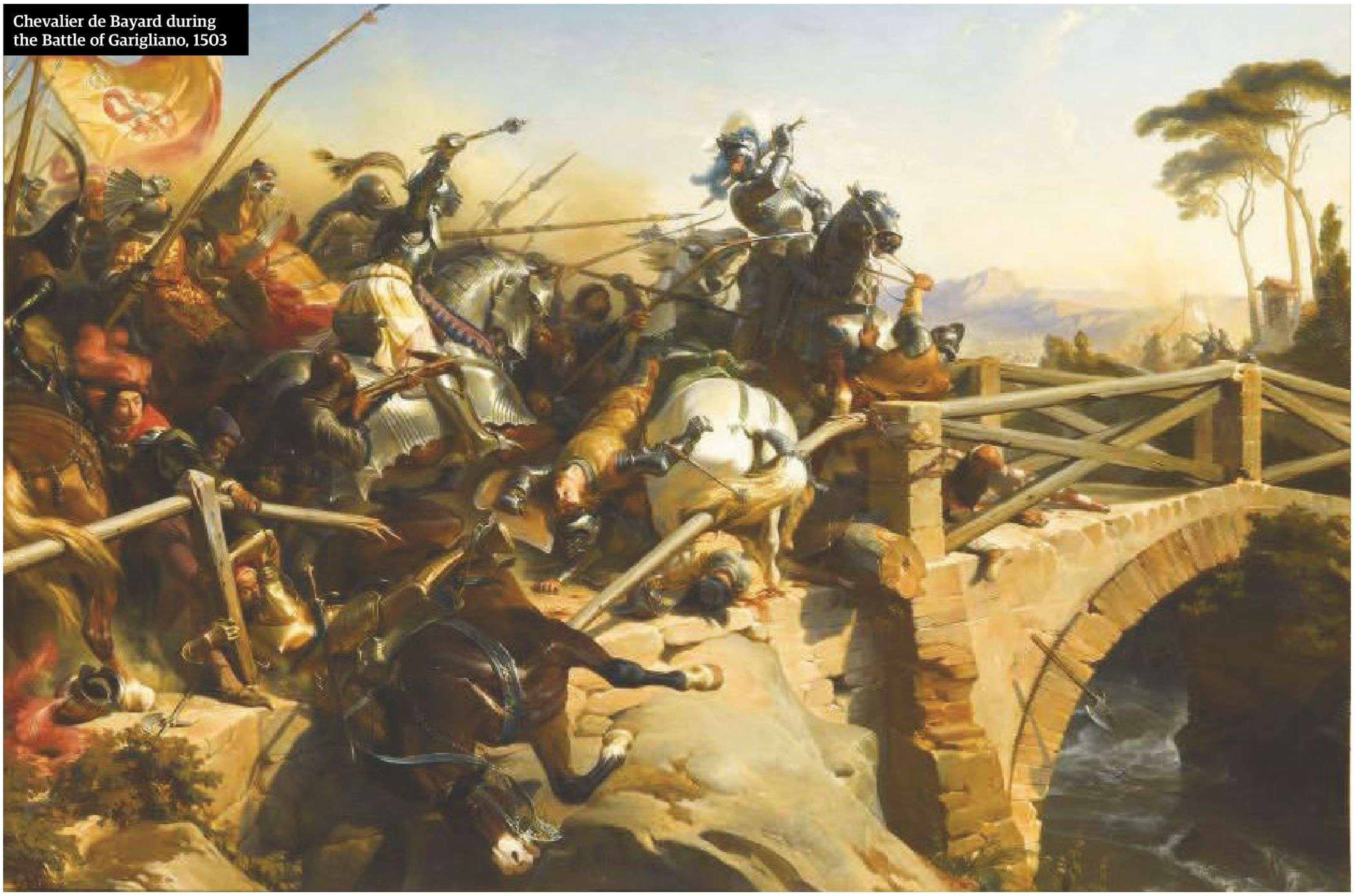
The next episode in Bandello's story features a destitute Cromwell wandering the streets of Florence until rescued by a wealthy Italian banker, Francesco Frescobaldi.

We may pause at this point to consider the version of events presented by John Foxe, the martyrologist, who, in the 1550s and 1560s collected what information he could from the people who had known the minister in his earlier years. He wrote of the adventurous youth that, "A great delight came into his mind to stray into foreign countries to see the world abroad, and to learn experience." Whatever Thomas's motivation, there was nothing exceptional about the lad's decision to leave England.

The two accounts do not necessarily cancel each other out. Cromwell may well have spent some time 'in the wars'. Many volunteers took to a mercenary life in the hope of making a fortune from the booty to be won. What rouses the slumbering dog of doubt is the mention of the name 'Frescobaldi'.

Not only were the Frescobaldis one of Florence's leading mercantile families, but they had close connections with England. For 300 years their wealth had been founded on the North Sea wool trade, and they maintained offices in London and Bruges. More significantly, they had been money lenders to several English kings. Currently, their London factor was Ludovico della Fava, who operated from an impressive mansion in Botolph Lane and maintained a close relationship with King Henry VII, for whom he arranged loans, negotiated business deals and performed valuable service as a general intelligence gatherer. It was della Fava who brought to England the Florentine

Chevalier de Bayard during the Battle of Garigliano, 1503



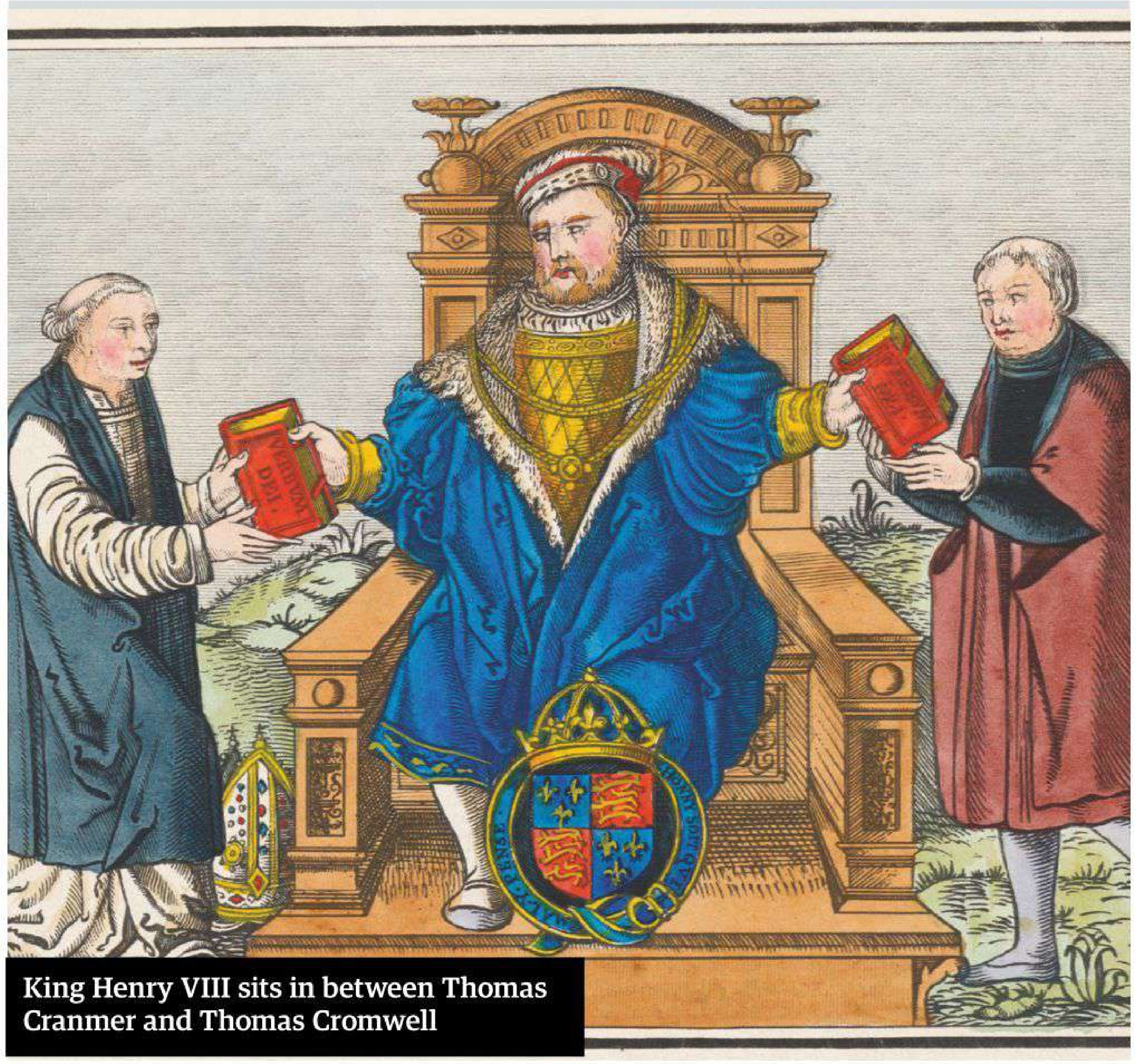
Cromwell and Henry VIII

For ten years, Cromwell kept the king in check

Wolsey's maxim for success as a minister of Henry VIII was, "Give the king what he wants." More's advice to Cromwell took a more moralising tone: "Tell the king not what he can do, but what he ought to do." Cromwell steered a course between the two. He tried to persuade the king that what he wanted was what his minister wanted.

Cromwell drew on the no-nonsense politics of the Italian city states. He knew that the changes he hoped for in English society could only be achieved by a despot but also that those changes would only be permanent if they had the backing of the political classes. He therefore ensured that the English Reformation was endorsed by royal diktat supported by parliamentary law. It was Henry who decided, for personal reasons, that he was head of the church in England but it was Cromwell who framed the statutes that turned this into political reality. He also backed this up with an effective propaganda campaign, aimed at bringing popular opinion into line with the Protestantism coming from the continent. What he realised – and what the king never grasped – was the long-term implications of the changes being imposed on the nation. To the end of his days Henry believed himself to be a good Catholic. Sometimes king and minister fell out and, on one occasion, Henry was seen to box Cromwell's ears, but Cromwell retained Henry's trust. Only when the king was angered at being shoehorned into marriage with a woman he did not like did he listen to those who pointed out to him that his trusted minister was a heretic.

Cromwell lost the personal battle but the revolution he instigated survived because, in the space of a few years, he had changed the framework of society. The landed wealth of the church was now in the hands of landlords who were not disposed to give it back. The parish churches had been stripped of 'superstitious clutter' that might remind people of the 'old days'. Finally, Cromwell had placed in the royal council and in the household of young Prince Edward men of the New Learning who would have the running of the state when Henry and Cromwell were both long gone.


King Henry VIII sits in between Thomas Cranmer and Thomas Cromwell

"He would have been expected to follow his father's business. This had so little appeal to the spirited teenager he ran away from home"

sculptor Pietro Torrigiano, who produced lifelike images of the English king and created the magnificent funeral monument that can still be seen in Westminster Abbey.

This might make us wonder whether we need Bandello's colourful romance. A more prosaic version of events might run thus: an enterprising young lad with some family connections in the Tudor court and the London mercantile aristocracy was brought to the attention of an established Italian banker who recognised his precocious talent and took him on as a trainee.

The only other documentary evidence relating to Cromwell's 'lost years' makes no mention of military service. It is from the pen of Cardinal Reginald Pole, who was a hostile witness. In his *Defence Of The Unity Of The Church* (1539) Pole railed against Henry VIII in the most acrimonious manner. Heaven knows he had cause enough to loathe the English king, who had slaughtered members of his family and sent assassins to track him down in Europe, but it was Henry's usurpation of the role of the pope that was the main object of Pole's diatribe. In a preface to the work, he identified the king as Antichrist and Cromwell as Satan's emissary. This was not the kind of treatise in which one might expect to find a cool, reasoned appraisal of Cromwell's life and character, and we certainly don't find it. The two men had only met once some nine or ten years earlier (Cromwell was some 15 years Pole's senior), so any information about him was based on the memory of a long-past conversation and hearsay. While Pole backs up the story of Cromwell having a close relationship with an Italian merchant, this is not necessarily Frescobaldi; it is an anonymous Venetian tradesman.

What these tantalising snippets establish is that, for some years, Cromwell was a fixture in the commercial life of northern Italy. In real terms, the details of how he came to be there do not matter. The significant fact is that we can place Thomas Cromwell at the centre of Renaissance Italy at a time of vibrant cultural life (Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael were just the peaks in an Alpine chain of artistic genius) and political upheaval. 1503 was not only the year of Garigliano; it also saw the death of Alexander III, the most corrupt pontiff ever to occupy Saint Peter's chair, and the failure of him and his son, Cesare Borgia, to turn the papacy into a family fiefdom. The man elected in Alexander's place was Julius II, the 'warrior pope'. In 1505, he set out at the head of his army to exert control over the Romagna, a broad belt of territory embracing much of central Italy. This put the papacy in increased conflict with the state rulers. Antipapalism (and, to an extent, anticlericalism) was rife, particularly in Florence. The assessment of Jakob Burckhardt, writing in 1860, still holds true:

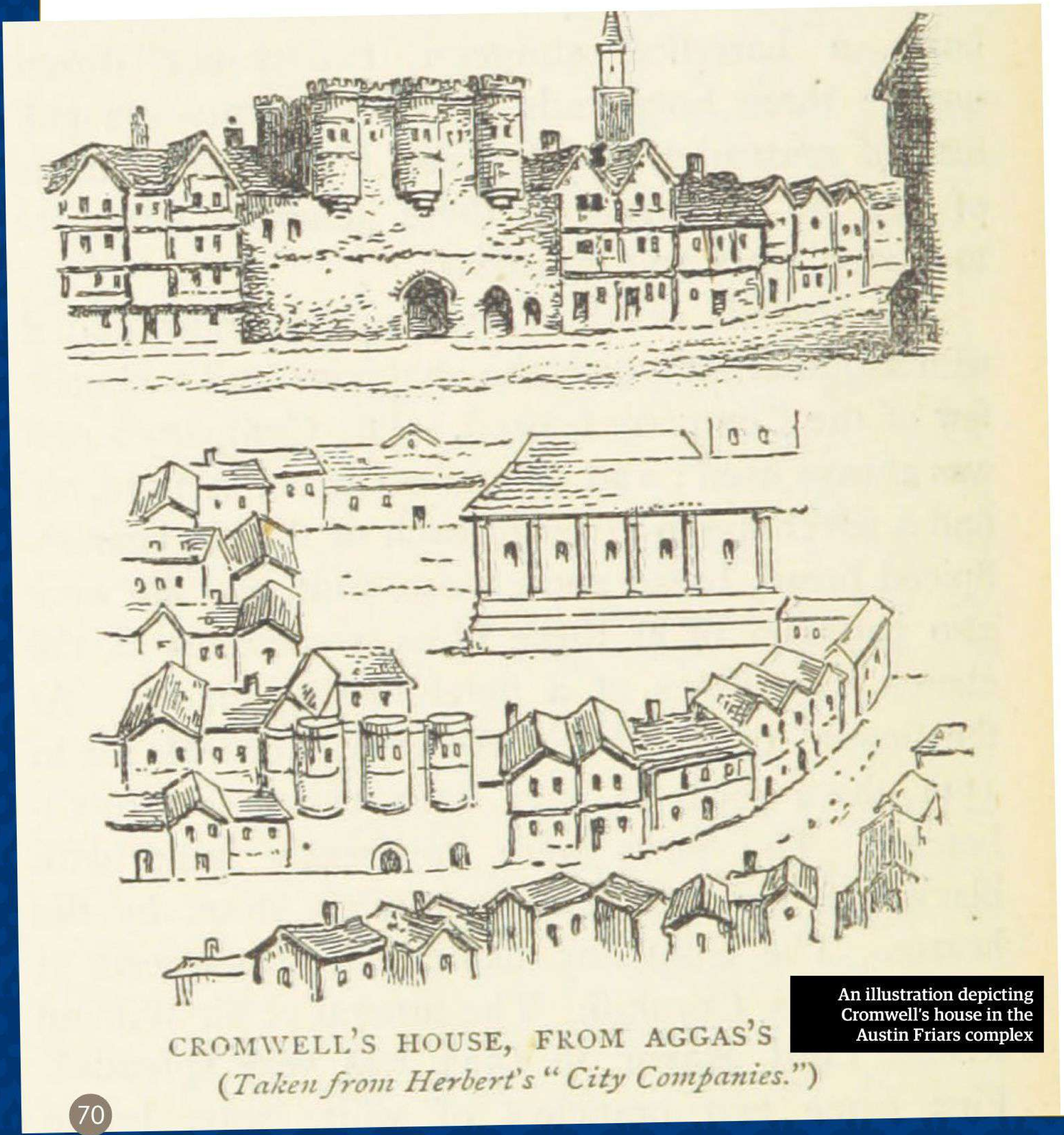
> *"The most elevated political thought and the most varied forms of human development are found united in the history of Florence, which in this sense deserves the name of the first modern State in the world… That wondrous Florentine spirit, at once keenly critical and artistically creative, was incessantly transforming the social and*

political condition of the State, and as incessantly describing and judging the change. Florence thus became the home of political doctrines and theories, of experiments and sudden changes."

Cromwell was, therefore, in the midst of a society bristling with ideas and hotly contested principles about the political framework of nations and the relations of church and state. He will have listened to and taken part in discussions in taverns and fashionable salons. From the Frescobaldis and the other friends he made in Italy, Cromwell also came to appreciate the finer aspects of Renaissance culture. He enjoyed and learned to emulate the lavish hospitality of his employer. He grew to appreciate the works of art with which Francisco decorated his mansion. In later years, many would comment that Cromwell was a generous, discerning and attentive host who surrounded himself with beautiful things. In the world of London's fashionable elite, Cromwell became one of the arbiters of Renaissance taste. For example, he brought from Venice to the Henrician court the acclaimed Bassano family of musicians.

> "Many would comment that Cromwell was a generous, discerning and attentive host"

Eventually, the ambitious Cromwell had gathered sufficient experience and contacts to branch out as an independent merchant. This commercial whizz-kid was trading on his own account in the Netherlands before he was out of his 20s. Foxe included a story from his home town of Boston to illustrate Cromwell's penchant for thinking outside the box. The local council had business with the Pope Leo X (1513-1521) but were at a loss as to how to catch the attention of his holiness. They hired Cromwell (who, obviously, already had a reputation as an international businessman). Knowing something of the pope's tastes, the envoy decided that the best way to Leo's heart was through his stomach. He had some jellied sweetmeats (then a rarity) prepared and, standing with other hopefuls in the throng seeking an audience, he and his companions struck up a "three-man song". This gained them admittance, the jellies were enjoyed and Leo graciously had the Boston documents sealed. The story of Cromwell's bold inventiveness can be dated from Vatican archives to 1518 and was still being told in Lincolnshire years after the event.

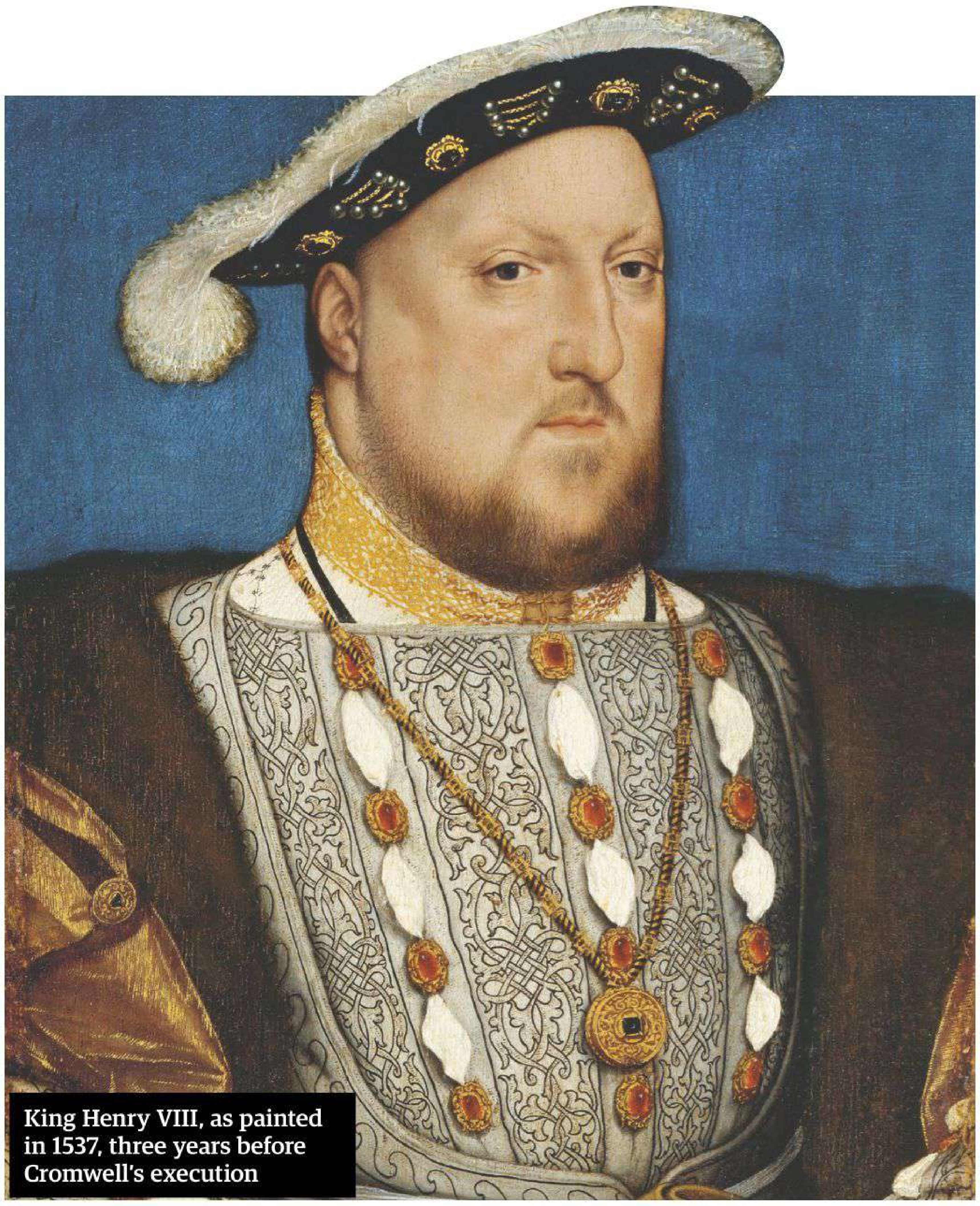

CROMWELL'S HOUSE, FROM AGGAS'S
(Taken from Herbert's "City Companies.")

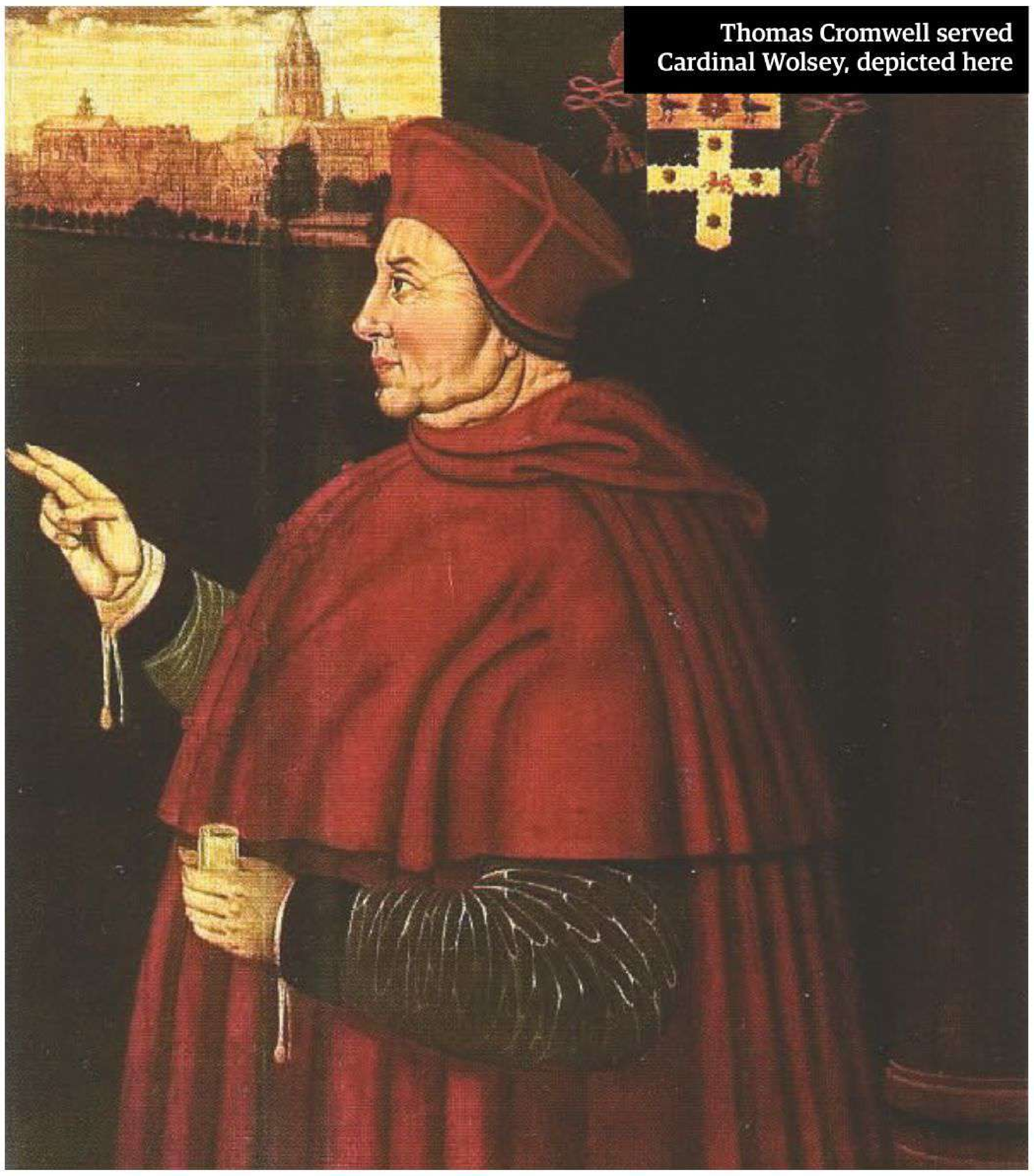
An illustration depicting Cromwell's house in the Austin Friars complex

By 1520, Cromwell was established in London as a legal adviser and business agent, attracting clients from the royal court and the mercantile community. In 1522, he could afford to buy an impressive house in the Austin Friars complex close to the north wall of the city. It is not surprising to learn that this site had long associations with the Italian immigrant community. The following year he became a member of parliament and, in 1524, this self-taught lawyer received the accolade of being elected as a member of Gray's Inn. His rise had been rapid to the position of a highly respected member of London society, but he was still ready to grab whatever opportunities for further advancement came his way.

Cardinal Wolsey, the king's right-hand man, recognised Cromwell's qualities and put him in charge of his current pet project. He was building a grammar school in his home town of Ipswich, connected to a new college (Cardinal College, later Christ Church) at Oxford. To pay for this lavish undertaking, he had 29 religious houses dissolved and confiscated their lands and property. This was a monumental legal and administrative undertaking but Cromwell proved himself equal to the task. The work took four years to complete. While it won him Wolsey's praise and not a little personal profit, it brought him "much grudge with divers of the superstitious sort and with some also of noble standing about the king," Foxe wrote. Cromwell and his agents were accused of corruption and unnecessary cruelty.

This is the first sight we have of the battle lines that were beginning to emerge in what would become the English Reformation. It was only a few years since Martin Luther, a Saxon monk, had challenged the power of the pope that claimed to influence the fate of souls in purgatory. This was by offering for sale certificates called 'indulgences'. Already some European rulers were coming round to Luther's way of thinking and changing their relationship with Rome. At a humbler level, merchants and artisans of the new persuasion


King Henry VIII, as painted in 1537, three years before Cromwell's execution


Thomas Cromwell served Cardinal Wolsey, depicted here

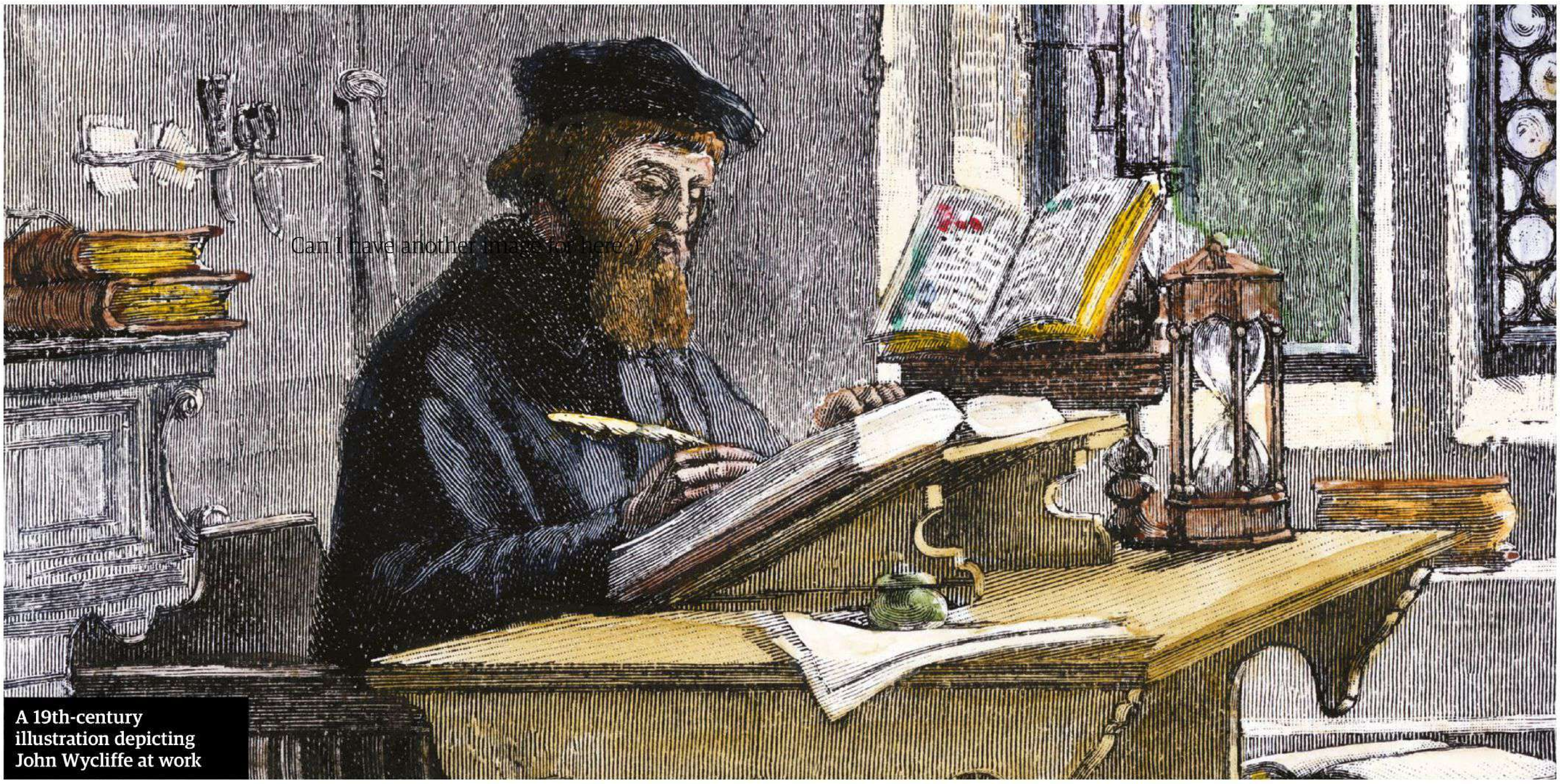
were crossing the Channel and bringing their beliefs with them.

What was Cromwell's position in the conflict that was beginning to emerge? The answer is that he became an evangelical (in simple terms, someone who considered the Bible to be more authoritative than the pope). Sometime in the early 1520s he had been deeply impressed by the 'Novum Instrumentum' and had learned it by heart. This controversial work by the leading scholar Desiderius Erasmus was a fresh Latin translation of the New Testament, based on the best available Greek texts. As such, it was a challenge to the Church's ancient standard authority, the Vulgate of Saint Jerome.

By 1527, Cromwell had become a friend and patron of men who advocated what was contemptuously dismissed as the 'New Learning'. He cautiously interested himself in a group of Thames Valley Lollards (followers of the 14th-century heretic and Bible translator John Wycliffe). But 'cautiously' is the appropriate word; Cromwell was not going to allow his religious sympathies to stand in the way of his rapidly advancing career.

Then came the crisis that could have stopped his career in its tracks. Henry VIII decided to have his marriage with Catherine of Aragon annulled and looked to Wolsey to make the necessary arrangements in Rome. Wolsey failed. In 1529, he was stripped of office and sent into virtual exile

The arms of Thomas Cromwell, as featured in a stained glass at the Bodlean Library, Oxford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A 19th-century illustration depicting John Wycliffe at work

in York. By this time Cromwell was the cardinal's principal agent and he feared that he would share his patron's fate. His enemies at court certainly hoped that they had seen the last of this Johnny-come-lately. But Cromwell met the threat with resolution and clear-headed brilliance, loyally supporting his late master while attending to the legal niceties of transferring Wolsey's considerable assets to the king. In little more than a year, Cromwell had become Henry's trusted adviser with a seat on the royal council.

> "In little more than a year, Cromwell had become Henry's trusted adviser with a seat on the royal council"

The regime whose service he was now entering was set on a course of centralising political power. The Tudors had considerably strengthened monarchical control before Cromwell arrived on the political scene. Henry VII had curbed the power of the great baronial houses and his headstrong son, in pursuit of an annulment of his marriage, was already flexing his muscles in matters ecclesiastical. For example, by 1530, King Henry VIII had a team of scholars working feverishly in libraries at home and abroad to discover documents that would support the theory that England was an 'empire' in which spiritual as well as temporal legislation was exercised in the name of the sovereign. With his monumental ego, Henry was ready to take on all comers at home and abroad, including the pope and any rulers whom the pope stirred up to fight as Catholic champions.

Cromwell's concept of the state was even more revolutionary than his royal master's. He had a vision of a stable and united society, a Christian 'commonwealth' in which a powerful monarch, supported by parliament, would be free to employ the wealth previously hoarded by the church for the wellbeing of all the king's subjects, especially the more vulnerable. He addressed such social ills as vagrancy, the enclosure of common land and corrupt legal practices.

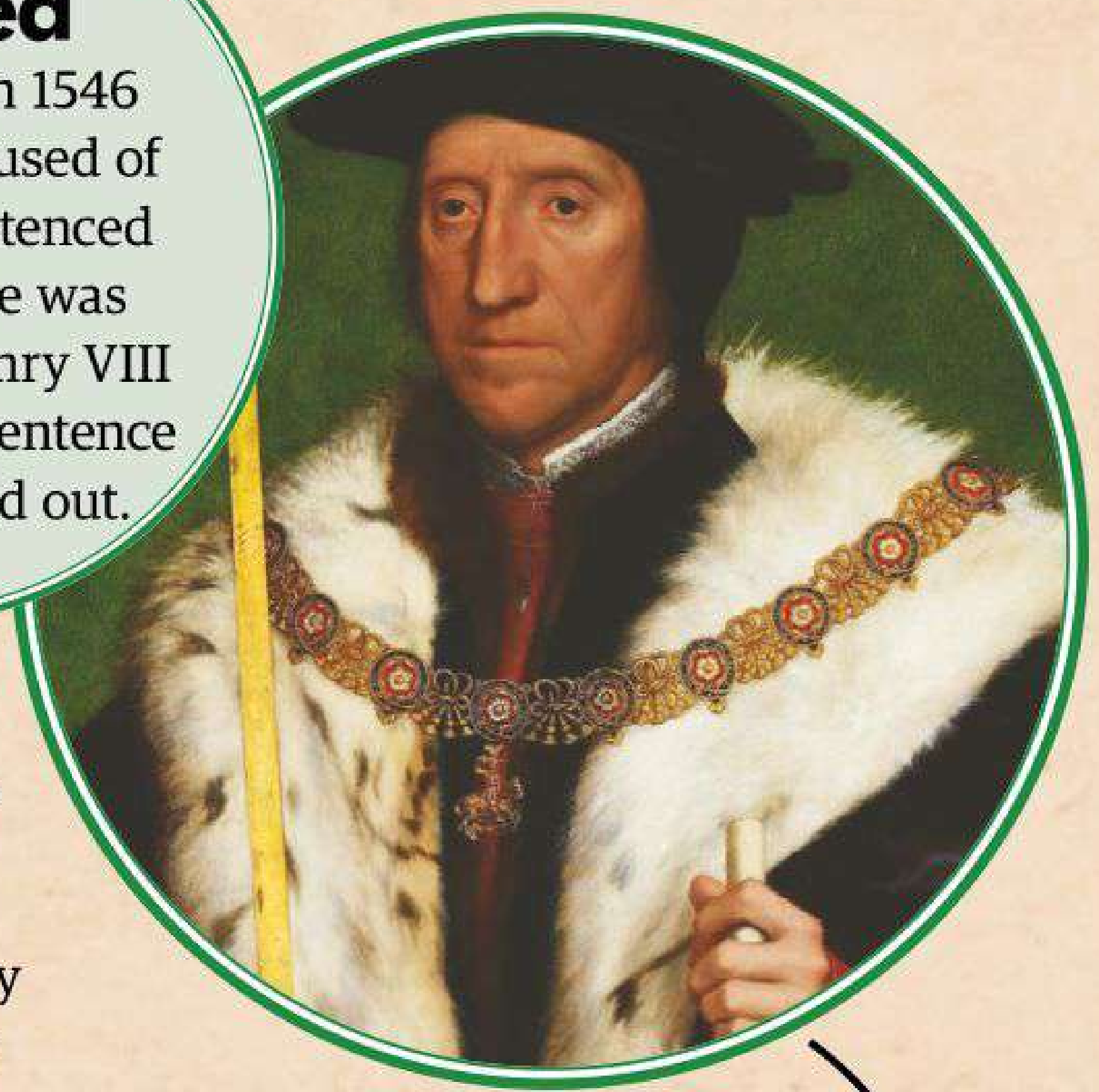
These were among the issues Cromwell had discussed with other thinkers in Florence, but they enjoyed a much wider circulation among intellectuals. Thomas More had explored the possibility of an ideal state in Utopia and Erasmus's most popular book, *In Praise Of Folly*, poked fun at authority figures, especially the clergy. Evangelicals were becoming bolder, vigorously promoting the New Learning in sermons, books and pamphlets. Luther had dubbed the pope 'Antichrist'. William Tyndale, a young Oxford graduate, was busy working on an English translation of the Bible, though he had been forced to carry out this forbidden activity abroad.

However, before Cromwell could even contemplate putting flesh on the bare bones of his ideals, there remained the little matter of extricating Henry from his marriage. Unsurprisingly, his paramour and, from 1533, his queen Anne Boleyn was also eager for this. She was also committed to reform. Anne, together with Cromwell and the new archbishop, Thomas Cranmer, formed a powerful alliance. A vigorous campaign was masterminded by Cromwell that involved propaganda and using parliament to authenticate Henry's claim to absolute sovereignty. He now drew on all his previous experience – his early contacts with the Catholic hierarchy, his work of suppressing religious houses, his control of parliament, his study of political theory in Italy, his connections with progressive thinkers through his extensive trading connections and, above all, his study of the Bible.

During the 1520s, Cromwell became an advocate of the translation of Christian Scriptures into English, believing that when people could read them for themselves, they would see how the Roman church had deviated from the original message. Cromwell was among the first members of the elite to possess a copy of Tyndale's banned New Testament long before Wolsey's fall. He could not risk boldly advocating it but he was a close friend of those who did. By 1527, he was a patron of Miles Coverdale (who later continued Tyndale's translation work) and of Hugh Latimer, the most famous evangelical preacher of the age. Cromwell became a patron of Latimer and other evangelicals, helping them to obtain church benefices. These and other contacts were all established in the 1520s before Cromwell entered

A whisper at the King's ear

Cromwell wasn't the only person to have the king's confidence, but like a tide, his influence rose and fell



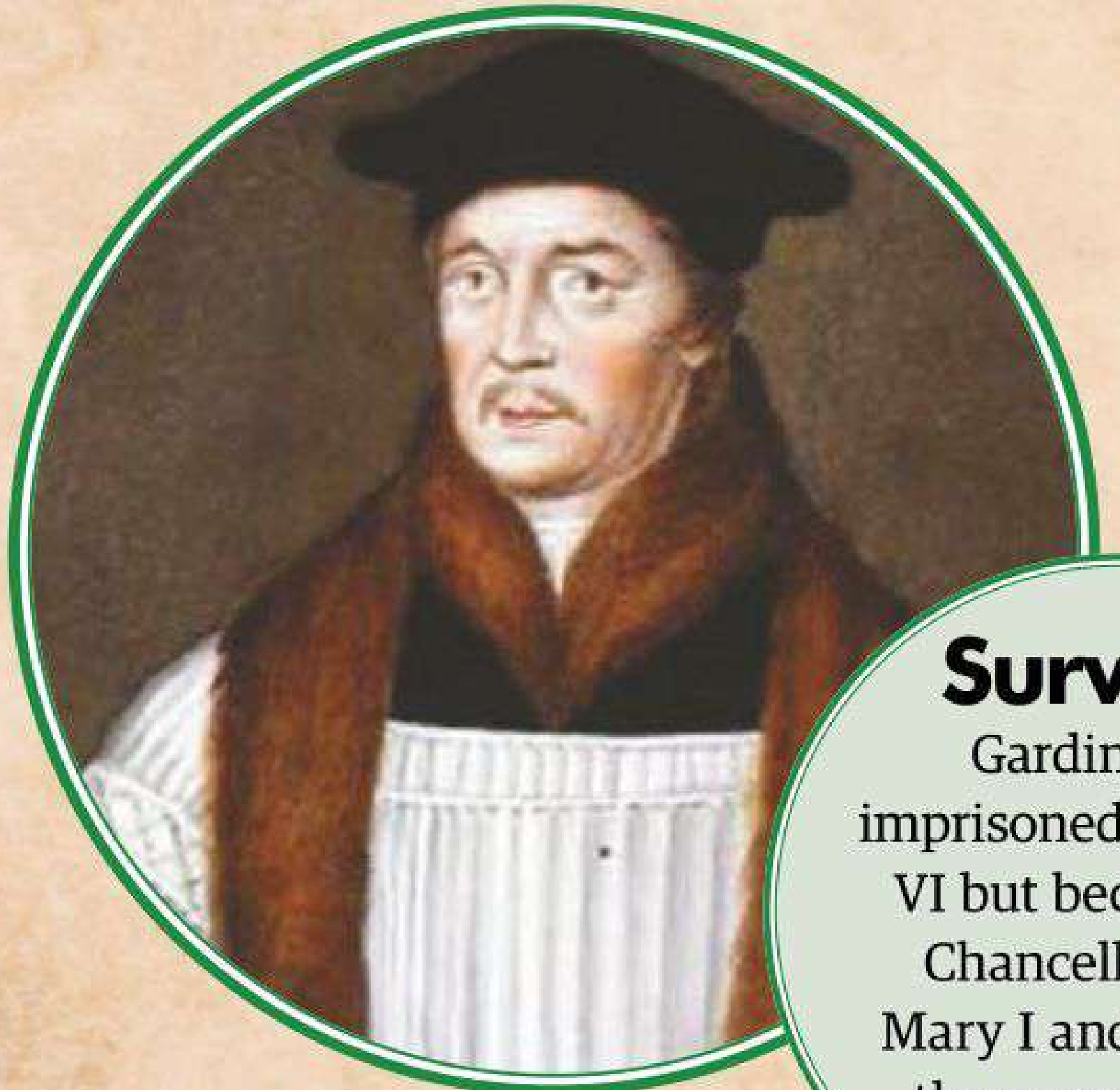
Survived

But only just. In 1546 Norfolk was accused of treason and sentenced to death, but he was spared when Henry VIII died before the sentence could be carried out.

Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk

b.1473-d.1554

Norfolk was Henry's most powerful nobleman and as a military commander helped to win the Battle of Flodden. At court he was a religious conservative and thuggish schemer who opposed both Cromwell and Cranmer. As well as engineering the downfall of Cromwell, Norfolk was also the uncle of both Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard and made no attempt to save either of them from execution.



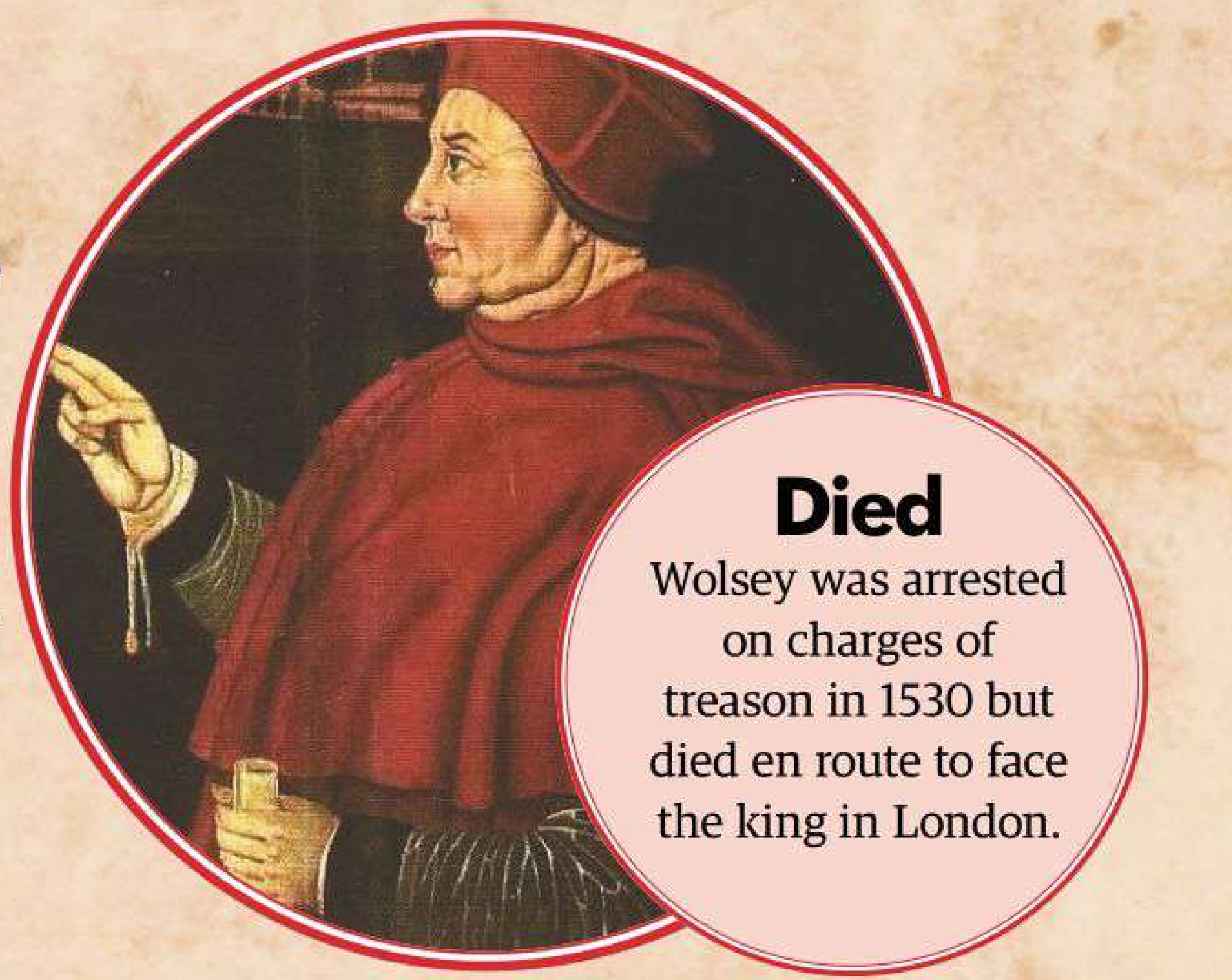
Survived

Gardiner was imprisoned by Edward VI but became Lord Chancellor under Mary I and approved the persecution of Protestants.

Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester

b.1483-d.1555

Gardiner was Henry's principal secretary and his bishopric made him extremely wealthy. As a religious conservative he opposed Protestantism but supported Henry's antipapal policies. He was an inveterate enemy of Cromwell but also despised Cranmer, who he felt deprived him of the archbishopric of Canterbury. He played a large role in the downfall of Cromwell.



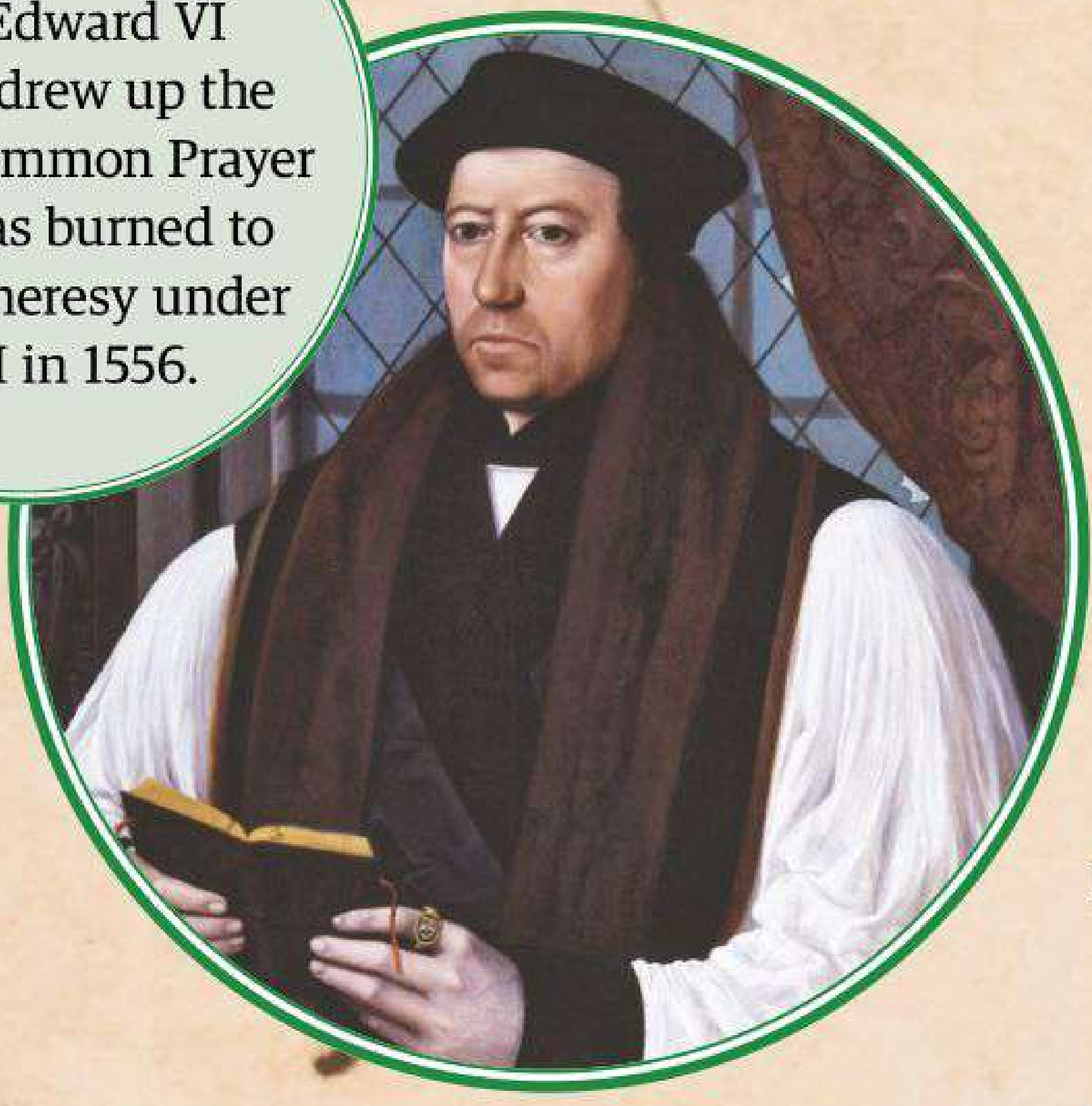
Died

Wolsey was arrested on charges of treason in 1530 but died en route to face the king in London.

Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, Archbishop of York

b.1473-d.1530

The son of an Ipswich butcher, Wolsey rose to become a cardinal and Lord Chancellor. Between 1515-29 he dominated Henry's government and his wealth meant that he had influence and could afford to build Hampton Court Palace. His diplomatic skills were formidable but his failure to secure a divorce for Henry from Catherine of Aragon led to his downfall and triggered the English Reformation.



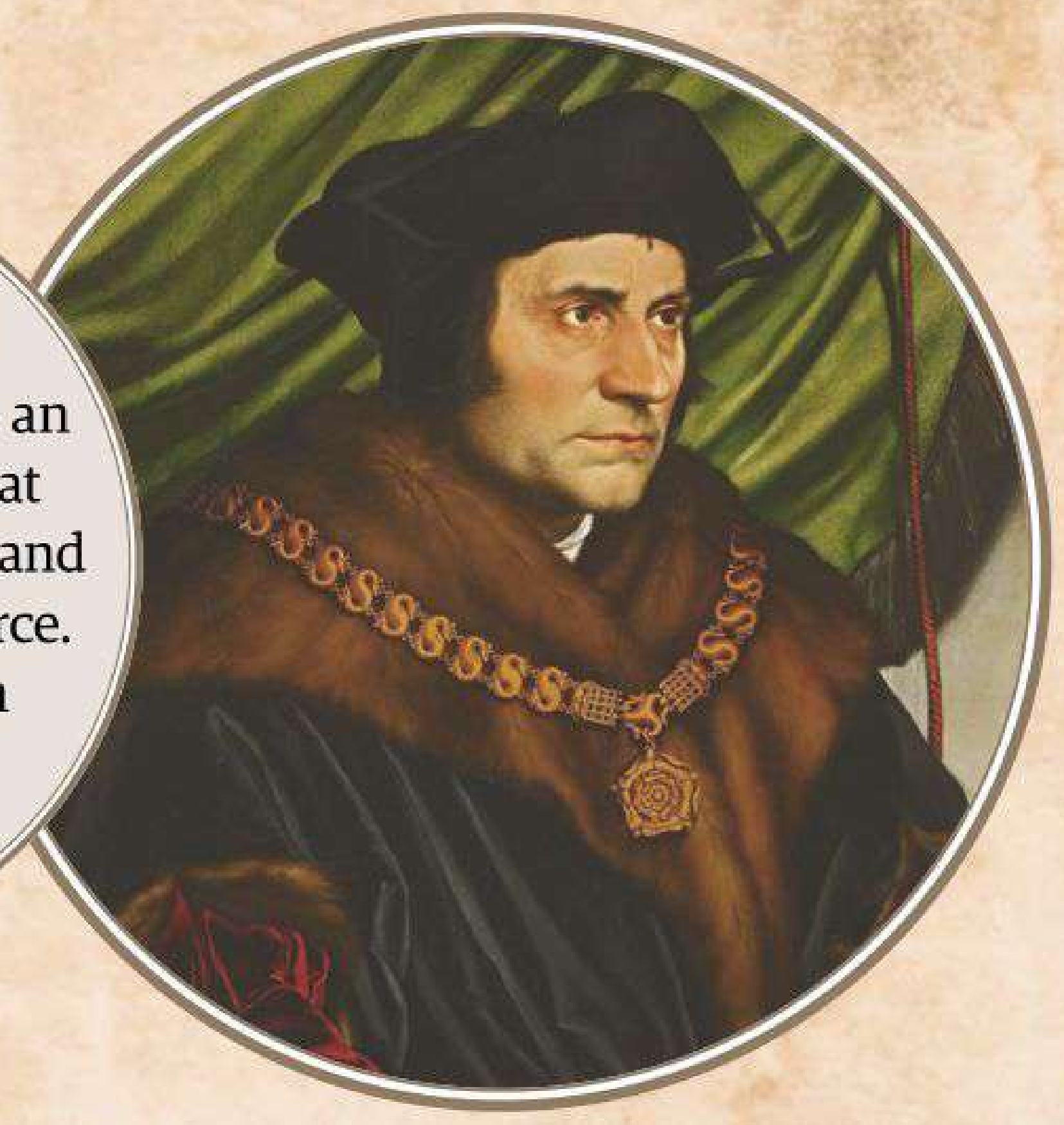
Survived

Under Edward VI Cranmer drew up the Book Of Common Prayer but he was burned to death for heresy under Mary I in 1556.

Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury

b.1489-d.1556

As the first Protestant archbishop of Canterbury, Cranmer was a significant leader of the English Reformation. He was the driving force behind the 'Break with Rome' and became heavily embroiled in the matrimonial policies concerning three of Henry's wives, including Anne Boleyn. In conjunction with Cromwell, Cranmer introduced English-language Bibles in parish churches. Unlike many others, Henry both trusted and liked Cranmer.



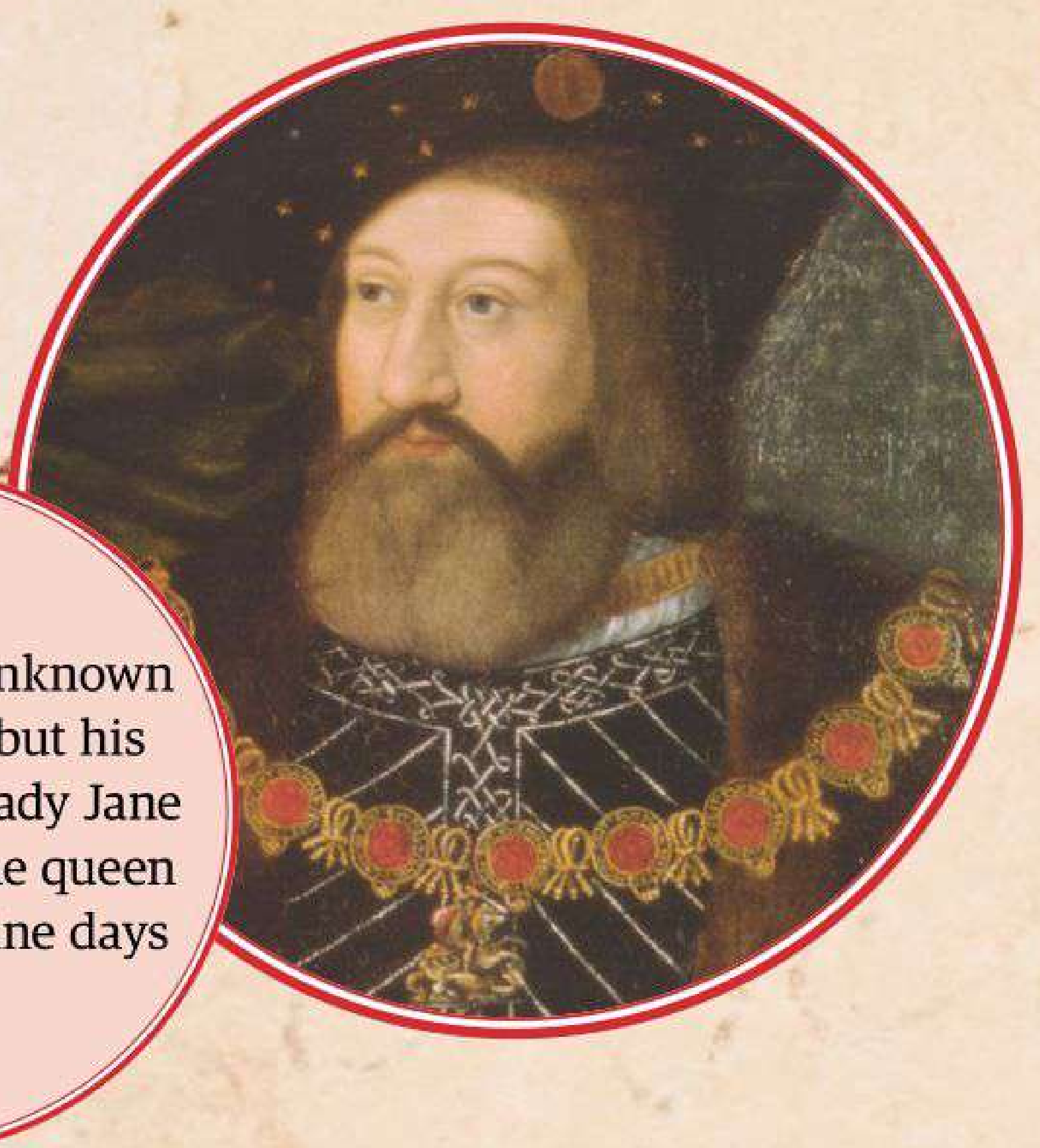
Beheaded

More refused to swear an oath of succession that repudiated the papacy and accepted Henry's divorce. He was executed on Tower Hill in 1535.

Thomas More

b.1478-d.1535

One of the most celebrated scholars of his day, More was a lawyer, humanist and author of Utopia as well as a close friend of Desiderius Erasmus. Initially well regarded by Henry, he succeeded Wolsey as Lord Chancellor in 1529. However, as a devout Catholic he resigned when Henry divorced Catherine of Aragon and declared himself head of the Church of England.



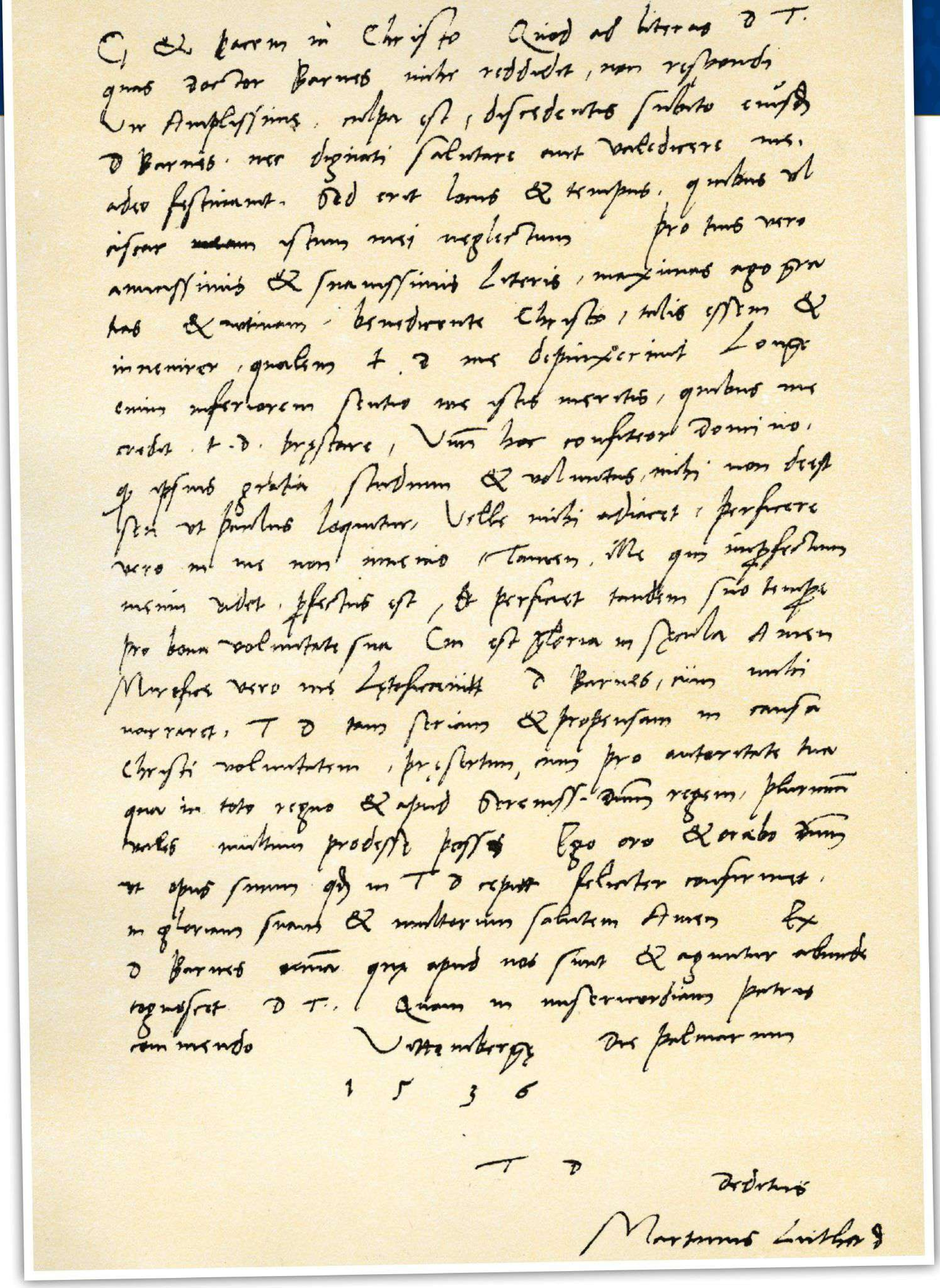
Died

Suffolk died of unknown causes in 1545, but his granddaughter, Lady Jane Grey, later became queen of England for nine days in 1553.

Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk

b.1484-d.1545

Suffolk's father had died fighting for Henry VII in 1485 and the duke himself was personally brave. He became a close friend of Henry VIII but was almost accused of treason when he married the king's sister Mary Tudor without permission. Cardinal Wolsey persuaded Henry to spare Suffolk and he soon returned to royal favour. However, Suffolk later helped to ruin Wolsey and remained a dominant member of Henry's council.



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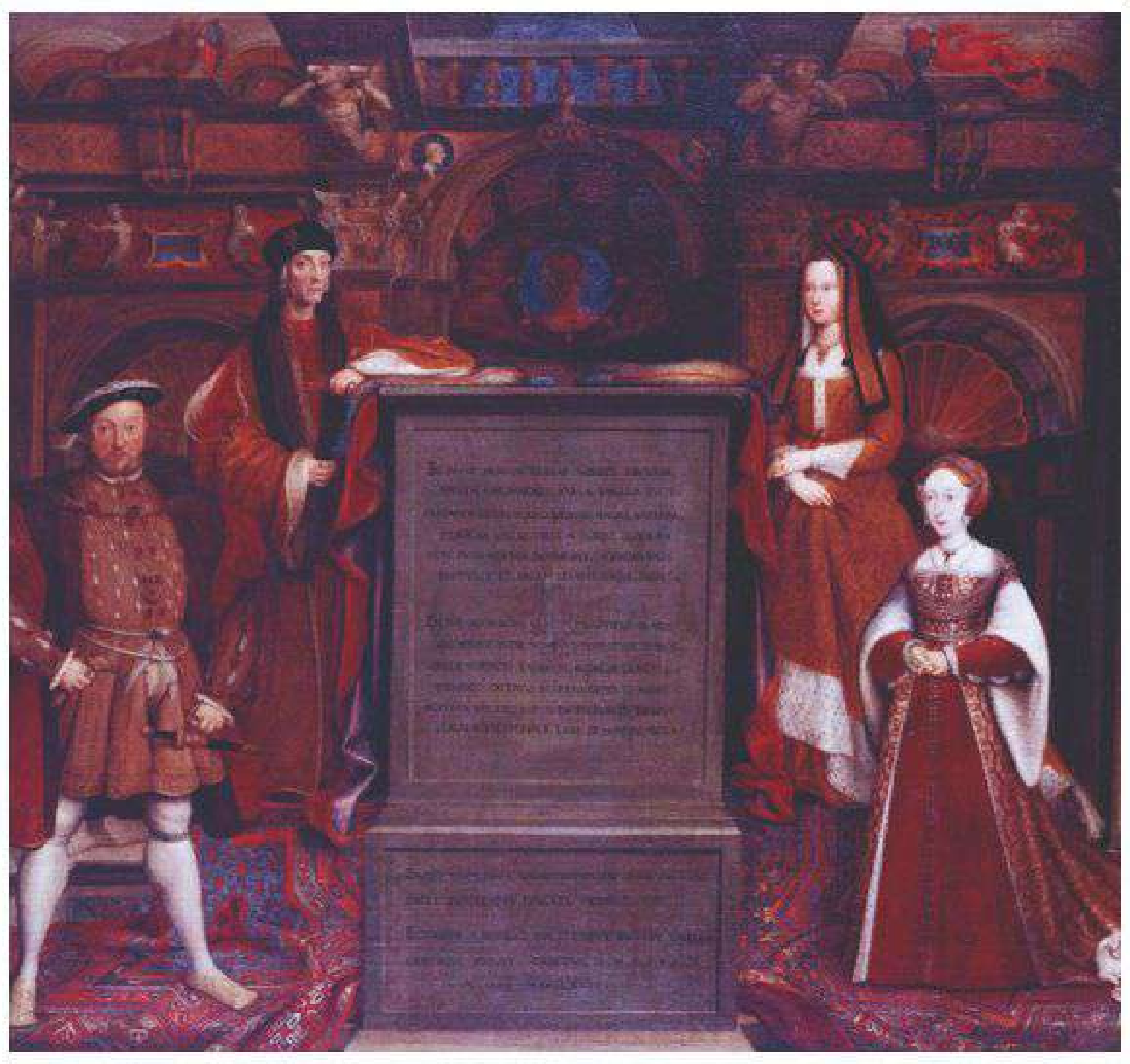
deditus

Martinus Luther

royal service, and he never severed his links with them despite their marks as enemies of reform.

As an ambitious politician with a career to make, he had no need of such allies. Indeed, it would have been prudent to avoid any contamination with men who espoused suspect opinions, particularly as Henry VIII had a morbid fear of heresy. Yet Cromwell, long before he was established as Henry's deputy in ecclesiastical affairs, was supporting and encouraging preachers, writers and scholars of advanced opinions. Cromwell's home became a place where radical ideas were discussed. John Oliver, a royal chaplain was one of those who enjoyed conversation round the Cromwell board in 1531-1532. In a letter of 1538, he reminisced how the company would compare Vulgate readings with those of the 'Novum Instrumentum'. The revelations he received during these debates, he affirmed, marked "the beginning of my conversion".

The most vital person not to buy into the commonwealth vision was the king. He enthusiastically received all the new wealth his minister brought him but he was less enthusiastic about spending any of it on anything other than himself. This was one cause of the split in the reforming triumvirate. Anne Boleyn accused Cromwell of encouraging her husband's grandiose personal ambitions and joined the ranks of the grumblers longing to bring the minister down. Fortunately for Cromwell, Henry decided to disencumber himself of wife number two and looked to his Mr Fix-it to arrange matters. Failure would have meant Cromwell going the same way as Wolsey. So, with his usual clear-sighted efficiency (or ruthlessness), Cromwell encompassed the queen's death by garnering evidence of her supposed adulteries. He then went on his energetic way bringing in more reforms.



Cromwell and the monasteries

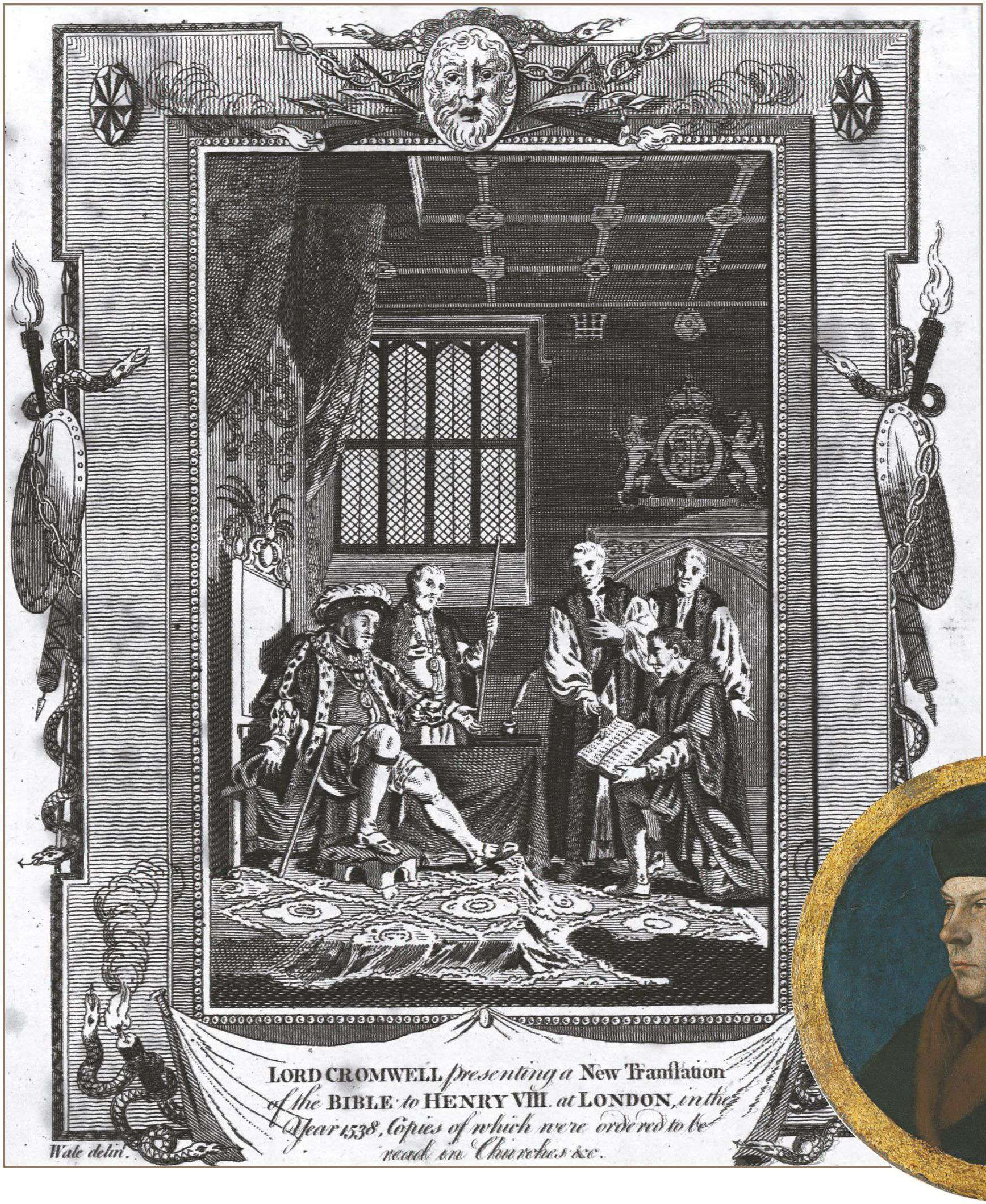
With the king's full support, Cromwell instigated reformation of religious houses

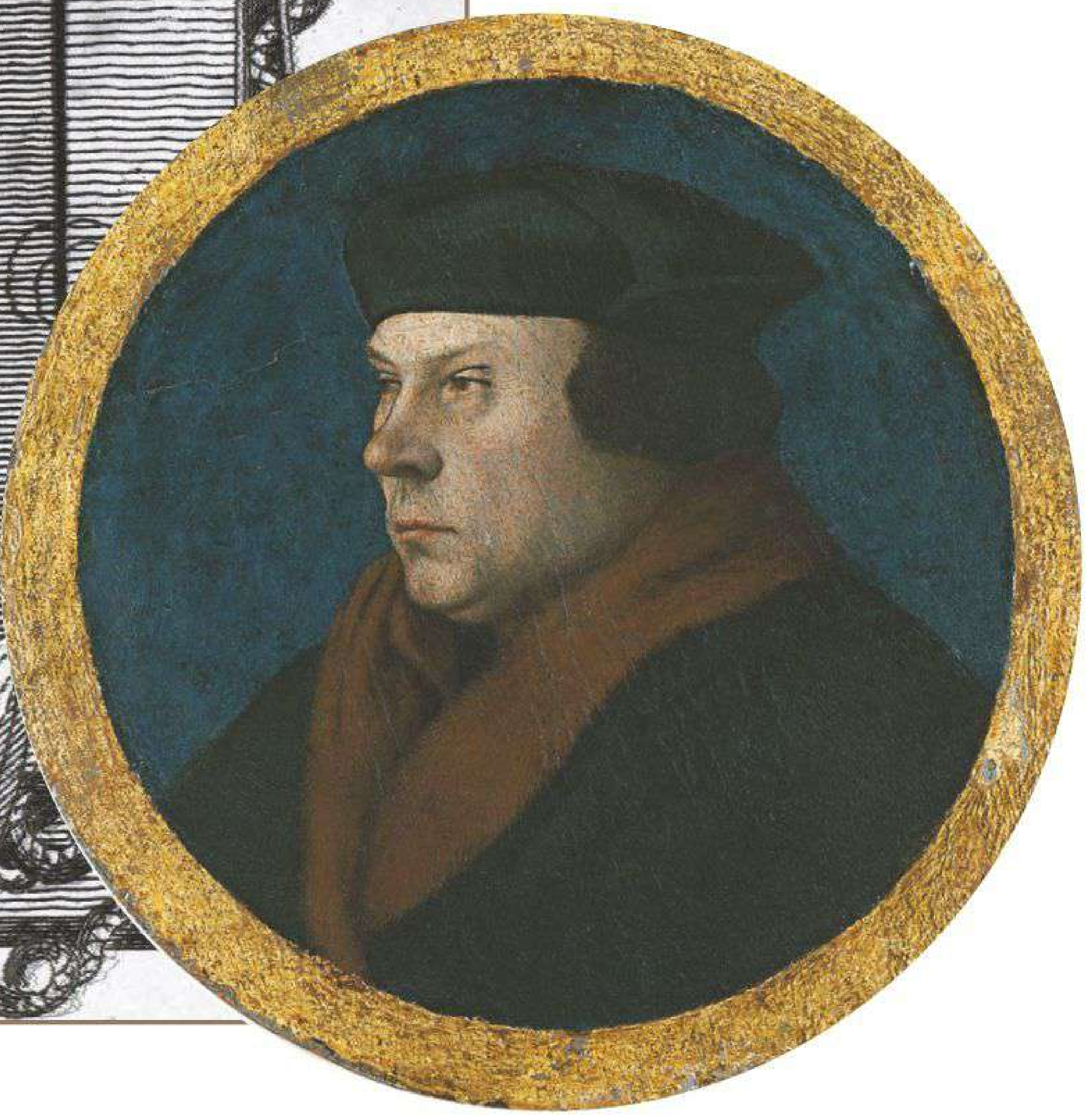
Wolsey made a serious attempt to reform the monastic system. He issued new instructions and, where numbers had dwindled, he advocated closure. So, there was a movement for reform before Cromwell. But reform is one thing, abolition another. Working as Wolsey's agent in closing houses to finance the cardinal's new colleges brought Cromwell into direct contact with the religious communities. He discovered real scandals as well as a widespread malaise in the system.

Later, he carried out his own in-depth survey and reported to the king that things were much worse than anyone had expected. There can be no doubt that he exaggerated, but he was helped by genuine examples of immorality, lax devotion and the use of fraudulent 'miraculous' religious images. The main reason for closing abbeys and nunneries was that they were bastions of support for the papacy.

Cromwell, therefore, had Henry's full support and, in 1535, the king appointed him his vice-gerent in spirituals, for the principal purpose of visiting the monasteries. Cromwell proceeded by stages. First, in 1536, came an Act for the suppression of small houses with an income of less than £200 per annum. It was this that provoked the Pilgrimage of Grace in the northern shires. Once it was put down, the remaining houses were vulnerable. No one would dare come to their defence. In 1539, the larger houses were abolished.

After the defeat of the northern rising, Henry commissioned a new painting depicting the king with his parents and wife arranged around a plinth bearing a Latin inscription proclaiming Henry's accomplishments. The one of which he was most proud was that, "He banished the unworthy from their altars and replaced them by upright men." There was never any question of anyone else officially taking credit for the purification of the English church, but without Thomas Cromwell, it certainly would not have happened at all.


LORD CROMWELL presenting a New Translation of the BIBLE to HENRY VIII. at LONDON, in the Year 1538, Copies of which were ordered to be read in Churches &c.
Wale delin.



LEFT
Cromwell presents the king with a copy of the translated Bible in 1538

BELOW
A miniature of Cromwell, as painted by court painter Holbein

OPPOSITE
A letter from Martin Luther to Cromwell, dated 9 April 1536

The eradication of English monasticism in the space of four years was a breathtakingly audacious undertaking and provided the financial fuel that drove the English Reformation. It was hugely contentious and, in 1536-1537, provoked the only serious rebellion of Henry's reign, the Pilgrimage of Grace. The religious houses certainly had their friends, but they also had their critics - from simple countrymen who resented the fact that 'idle' monks and nuns enjoyed a more luxurious lifestyle and lived longer than those outside their walls, to the king, himself, who was only too aware that most communities were responsible directly to the pope and not to the king or the bishops. In 1533, Cromwell put down a very clear marker when he steered through parliament an 'Act for the punishment of the vice of buggery', which made homosexual activity a capital offence and brought it within the ambit of civil law. He then used it or the threat of it when dealing with the monasteries.

There were two aspects of Cromwell's campaign - negative and positive. The negative involved not just removing from the landscape all the familiar monastic buildings, it went much further. Clergy were instructed to remove from their churches statues, crucifixes, rood screens and everything that might call to mind the old religion.

The positive aspect of change was a propaganda campaign of books, pamphlets, sermons and printed images, some by the king's painter, Hans Holbein. But the most permanent change and the one dearest to Cromwell's heart was the printing of an officially approved English Bible. He spent enormous energy and hundreds of pounds on this project and he lived to see it set up in every parish.

© Alamy, TopFoto; Getty

Defender OF THE Faith

The journey of king and country from Catholicism to the Church of England

Words by DEREK WILSON

Between 1530 and 1546, England turned its back on its Catholic past and moved decisively towards its Protestant future. But was King Henry VIII ultimately responsible?

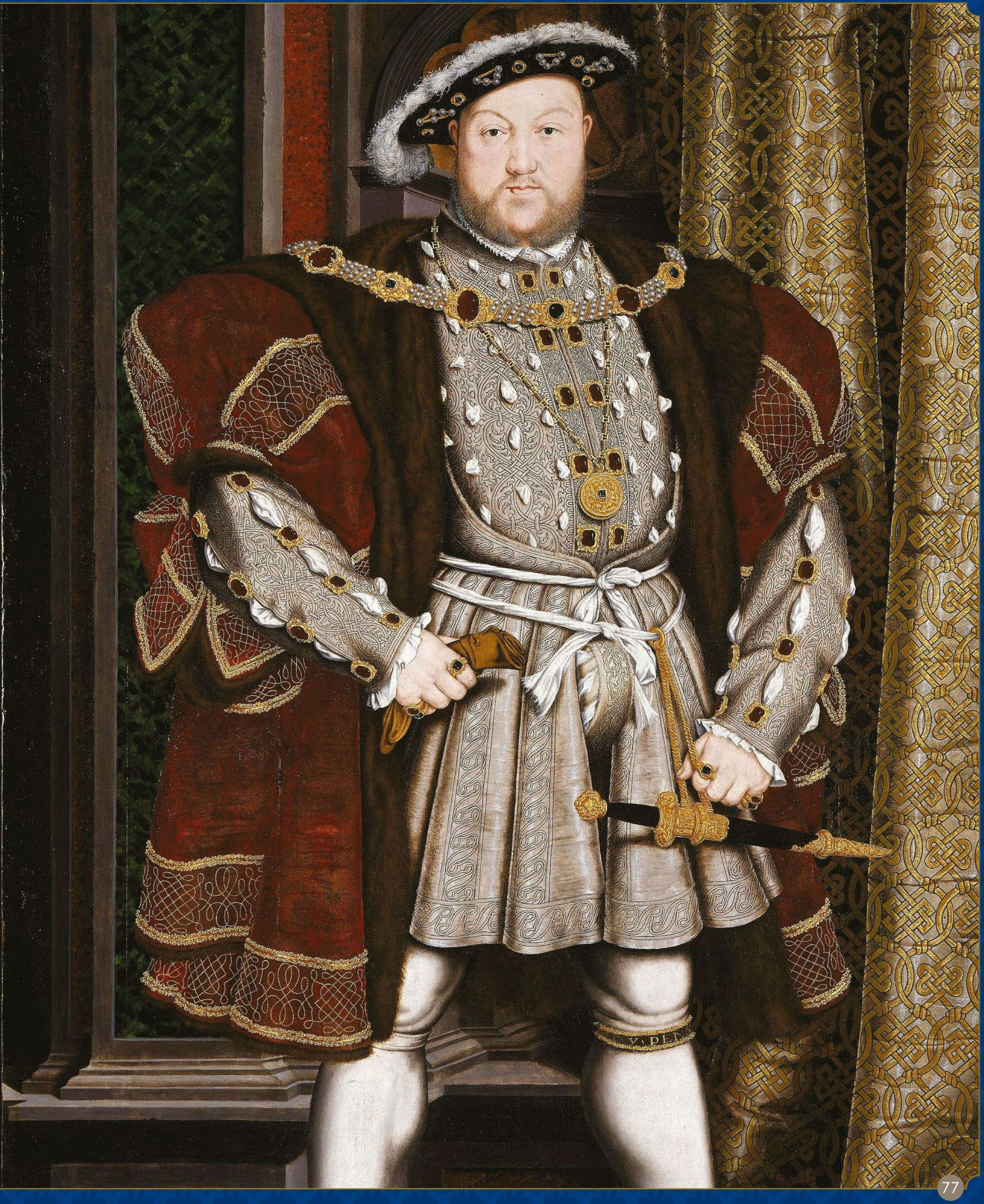
To some, that may seem a strange question – most of us were taught about the English Reformation in school. The king broke with Rome to end his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. He dissolved the monasteries and suppressed the Pilgrimage of Grace, a rebellion raised in protest of his religious changes. Henry made himself head of the Church in England and supervised new doctrinal formularies, executing those wanting to restore the 'old religion'.

But the fate of nations is rarely, if ever, decided solely by individuals, however powerful they might've been. England's Reformation was the result of complex cross-currents. So it is worth asking the question: 'Just what part did Henry VIII actually play in the Reformation?'

In early 16th-century England, authority was shared between civil and ecclesiastical bodies. The Church and the Crown had their own courts, taxes and sanctions. Bishops and monastic leaders owned one-third of the nation's landed wealth – the inevitable conflict between Church and State had been going on for centuries. In practice, European monarchs negotiated the balance of rights and responsibilities with Rome – for instance, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain gained the right to appoint all their senior clergy in 1486. As well as this kind of political interplay, there was mounting concern in several countries about corruption in the Church and both reformers in the clergy and non-ecclesiastical critics were pressing with increasing insistence for a papal clean-up. Some rulers even joined the chorus of complaint.

But not Henry VIII. He was genuinely devout and considered himself a loyal son of the Holy Church. In fact, when Lutheran 'heresies' began to appear in Europe, he was one of the first to show support for Rome. Luther's ideas began to create a stir in 1518 and, within a year, Henry set about preparing a riposte. His *Defence of the Seven Sacraments* (co-written with Thomas More) was published in 1521 and earned him the grant of a papal title, 'Defender of the Faith'.

This was when heretic hunting began in England. Bonfires were made of Lutheran books. Suspected heretics were detained in the Midlands and the Home Counties. 50 'evangelicals' in Buckinghamshire were ordered to do public penance for their beliefs. Some were burned at the stake.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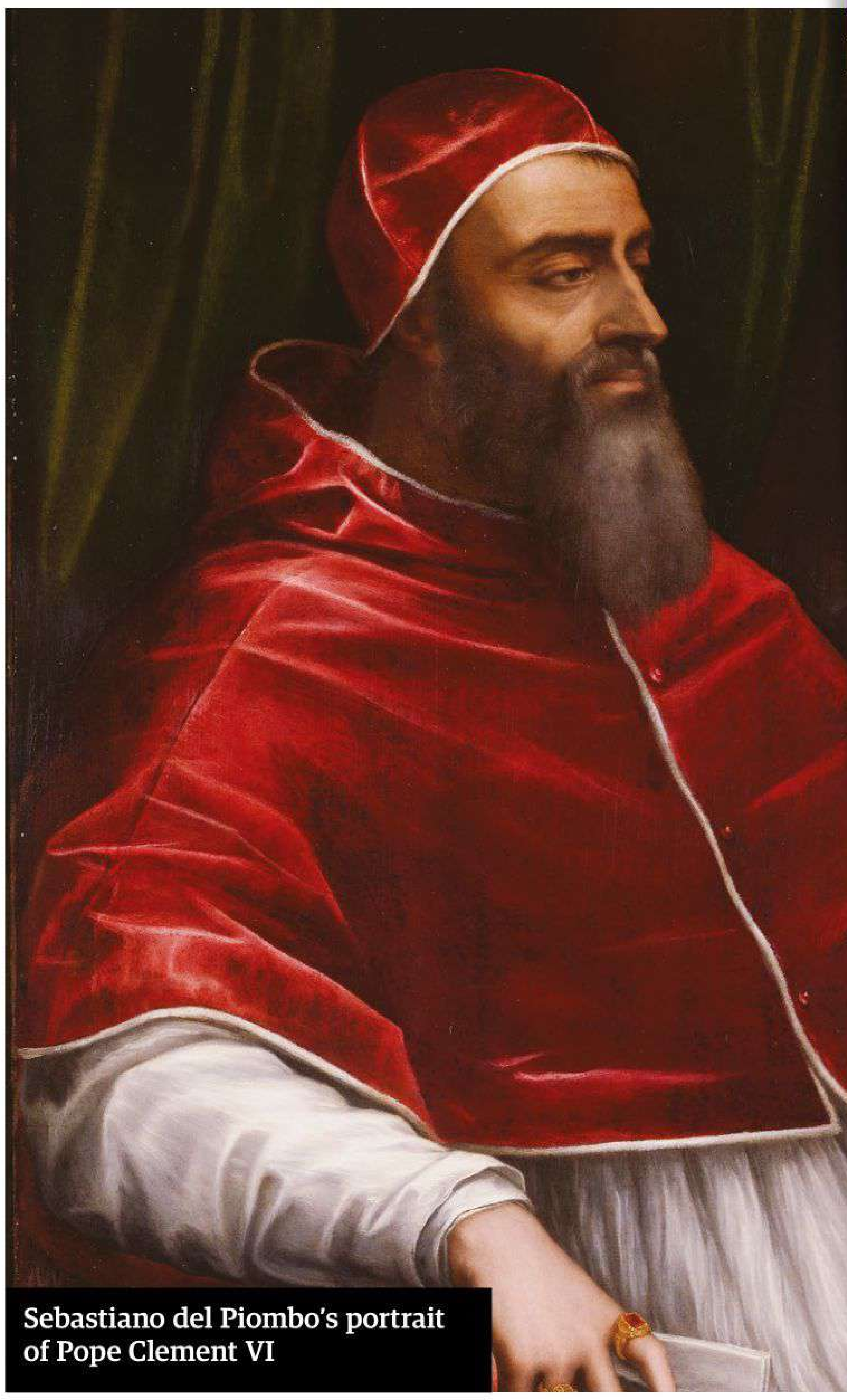
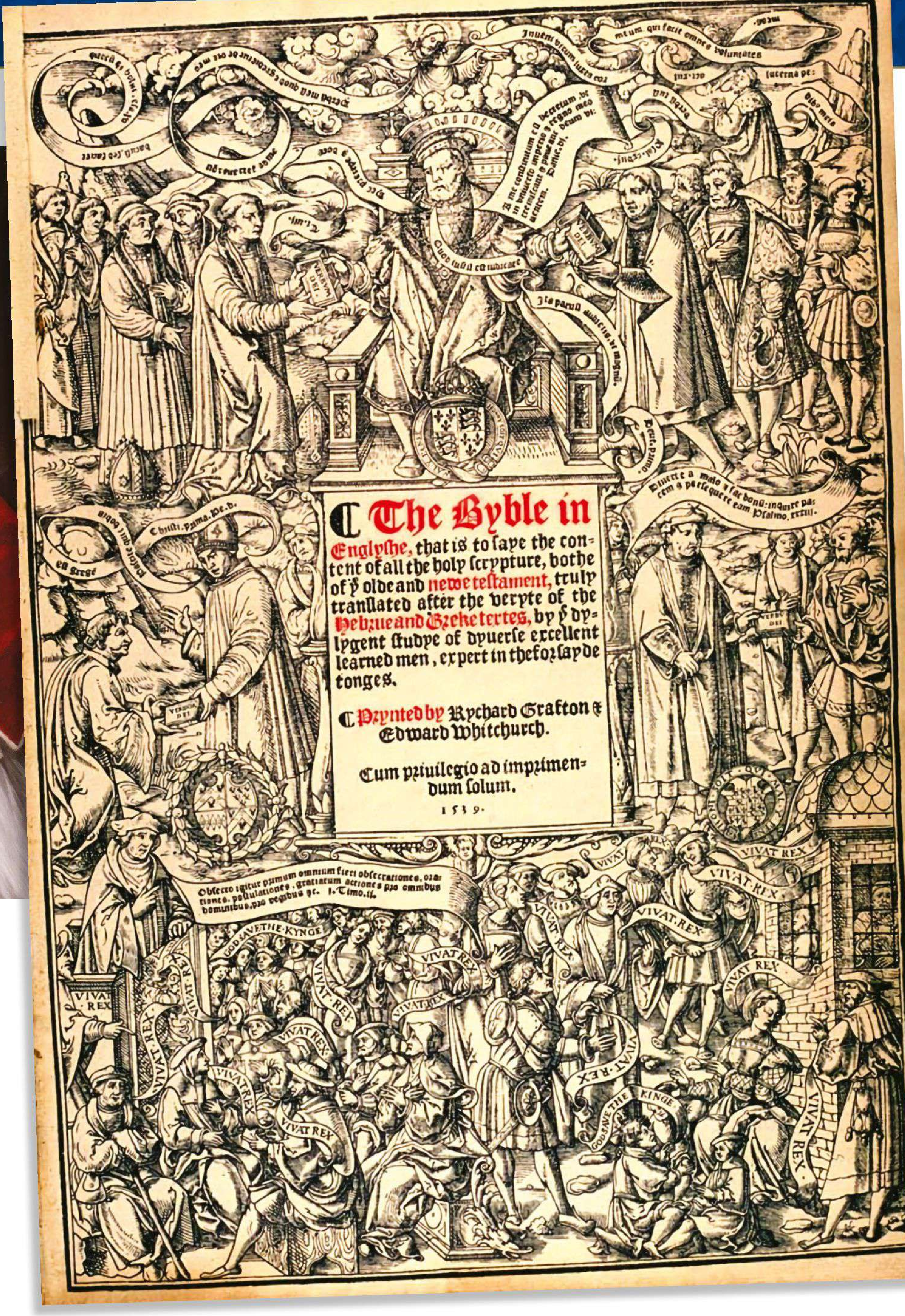


Sebastiano del Piombo's portrait of Pope Clement VI



The Byble in
Englyshe, that is to saye the content of all the holy scrypture, bothe of yͤ olde and newe testament, truly translated after the veryte of the Hebrue and Greke textes, by yͤ dylygent studye of dyuerse excellent learned men, expert in theforsayde tonges.

Prynted by Rychard Grafton & Edward Whitchurch.

Cum priuilegio ad imprimendum solum.

1539.

VIVAT REX
GOD SAVE THE KYNGE

The word 'evangelical' came from the Greek word for 'gospel' and indicated those who looked to the written Bible for their inspiration rather than to priests. Church law forbade English people from reading, or even owning, vernacular Bibles.

The Thames Valley sufferers were members of a sect started by the Oxford scholar John Wycliffe in the late 14th century and he and his followers deliberately translated and disseminated the holy text. These 'Lollards' were a small and insignificant radical element, but now they were encouraged by the influx of Lutherans from the continent.

But religious dissenters were not the only critics of the Church - there was a fundamental mood of scepticism in many communities. It found expression in a variety of ways from alehouse jokes about monks and nuns to witty exposés of society such as Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* and Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*; from official concern about the inadequacy of poorly educated clergy to academic attacks on traditional doctrines.

People had always grumbled about priests more interested in exacting their tithes than caring for their flocks, but protests were infrequent because the pope held the keys of heaven and hell. To challenge His Holiness or his minions was to risk endangering your immortal soul.

When Luther and, very soon, other learned theologians breached the doctrinal walls protecting papal authority, it came as an immense relief to many. Now their eternal salvation no longer rested on Masses mumbled by semi-literate priests or prayers intoned day in and day out by monks paid to do the job. Instead, believers were free to make their own contract with their Creator and Judge, and they had at their fingertips a book that supported their challenge of Rome's assumed inerrancy. By 1526, a vernacular New Testament published abroad by William Tyndale, a scholar living in exile, was smuggled into the country and eagerly bought by readers wishing to keep up with the latest intellectual fashion.

King Henry was not one of them. Despite his *Seven Sacraments*, he was not a keen follower of academic debate and by now he had other things on his mind. 17 years of marriage to Catherine had not provided him with a legitimate male heir, something that was of vital importance as he believed the Tudor dynasty had been raised up by God to give the country peace and security after decades of civil war. Should the succession falter, England might fall back into chaos.

The only possible solution was remarriage to a woman capable of producing healthy sons. He had found a suitable candidate in the vivacious 25-year-old Anne Boleyn. She was some ten years his junior, whereas Catherine was six years older than him and probably past childbearing. All that was needed was for the pope to annul

Henry's marriage. This Clement VII was unable and unwilling to do – thus began the long struggle to resolve the king's 'Great Matter'.

Anne Boleyn was sympathetic to the reformed cause and had her own copy of Tyndale's *New Testament*. She did not dare show this to Henry, but she did show him another book by the exiled Englishman. *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528) was a denunciation of the temporal power of the pope and an assertion of the divine authority held by kings. Henry was delighted and tried to enlist Tyndale for his propaganda team but Tyndale didn't trust the anti-Lutheran king and certainly didn't approve of Henry's divorce plans.

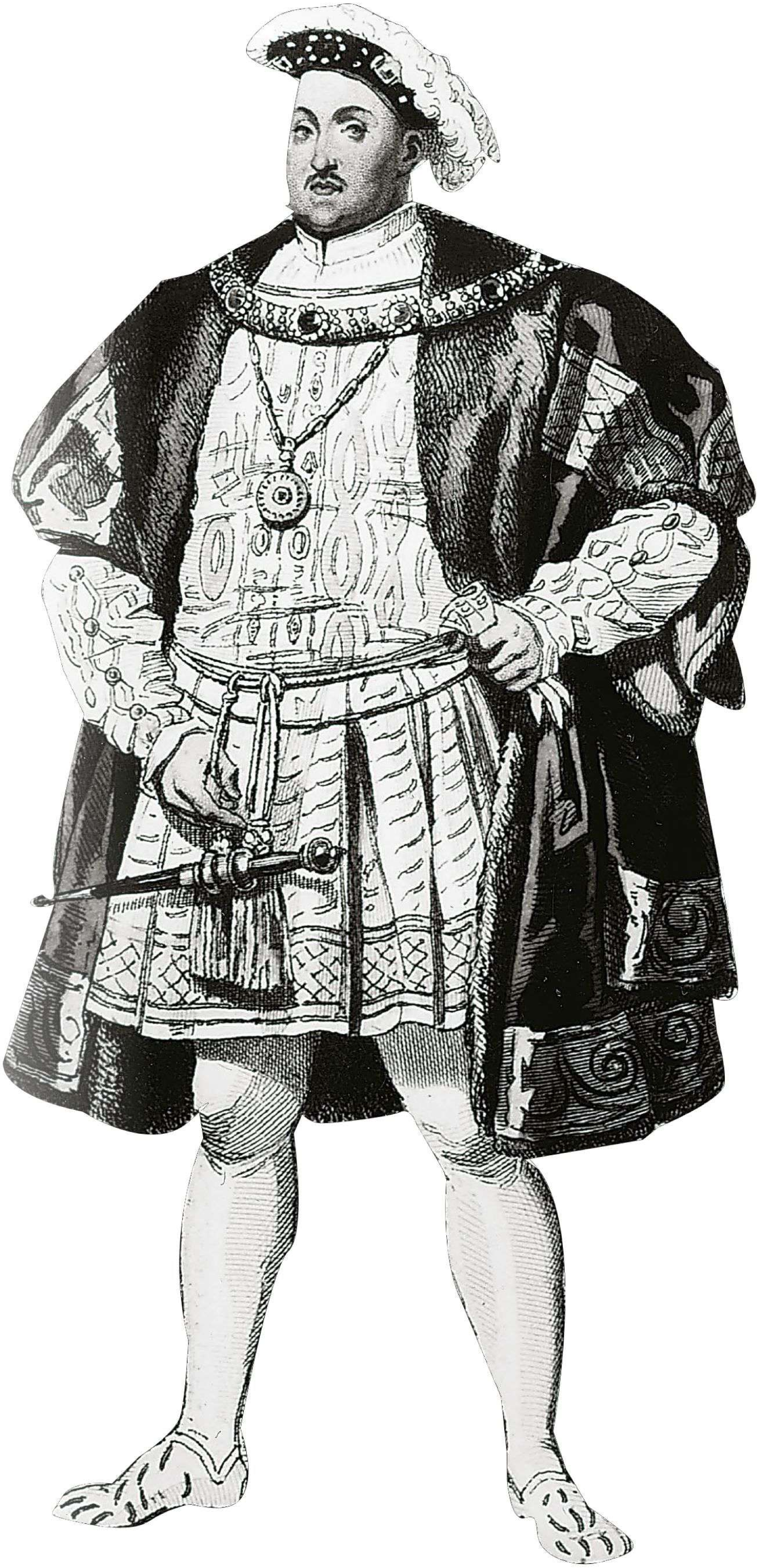
> "He was not a keen follower of academic debate and by now he had other things on his mind"

Tyndale was very far from being the only campaigner urging the king to bring the clergy to heel. Simon Fish, writing from the safety of Antwerp, complained of clerical exploitation of the poor. His *Supplication for the Beggars* urged the king to "tie these holy idle thieves to the carts to be whipped naked about every market place till they will fall to labour ... Then shall the gospel be preached [and we will] daily pray to God for your most noble estate long to endure."

From the tone of such pamphlets and from the reaction of ecclesiastical authorities, who were becoming increasingly vigorous in burning reformist literature and hauling suspected heretics into the courts, it can be seen just how violent the conflict was becoming. Writing from Antwerp in 1531, businessman and diplomat Stephen Vaughan expressed deep anxiety about the persecution of suspected heretics.

The recipient of Vaughan's letter was Henry's new secretary and chief minister, Thomas Cromwell. Henry had disposed of his predecessor, Thomas Wolsey, for failing to achieve the royal divorce. It was Cromwell who conceived the strategy that brought the king's Great Matter to a successful conclusion and steered England through the violent currents threatening disaster.

The regime needed to appeal to anticlerical and anti-papal sentiment and this was achieved through a propaganda programme relying on royal proclamations, parliamentary statutes, sermons,

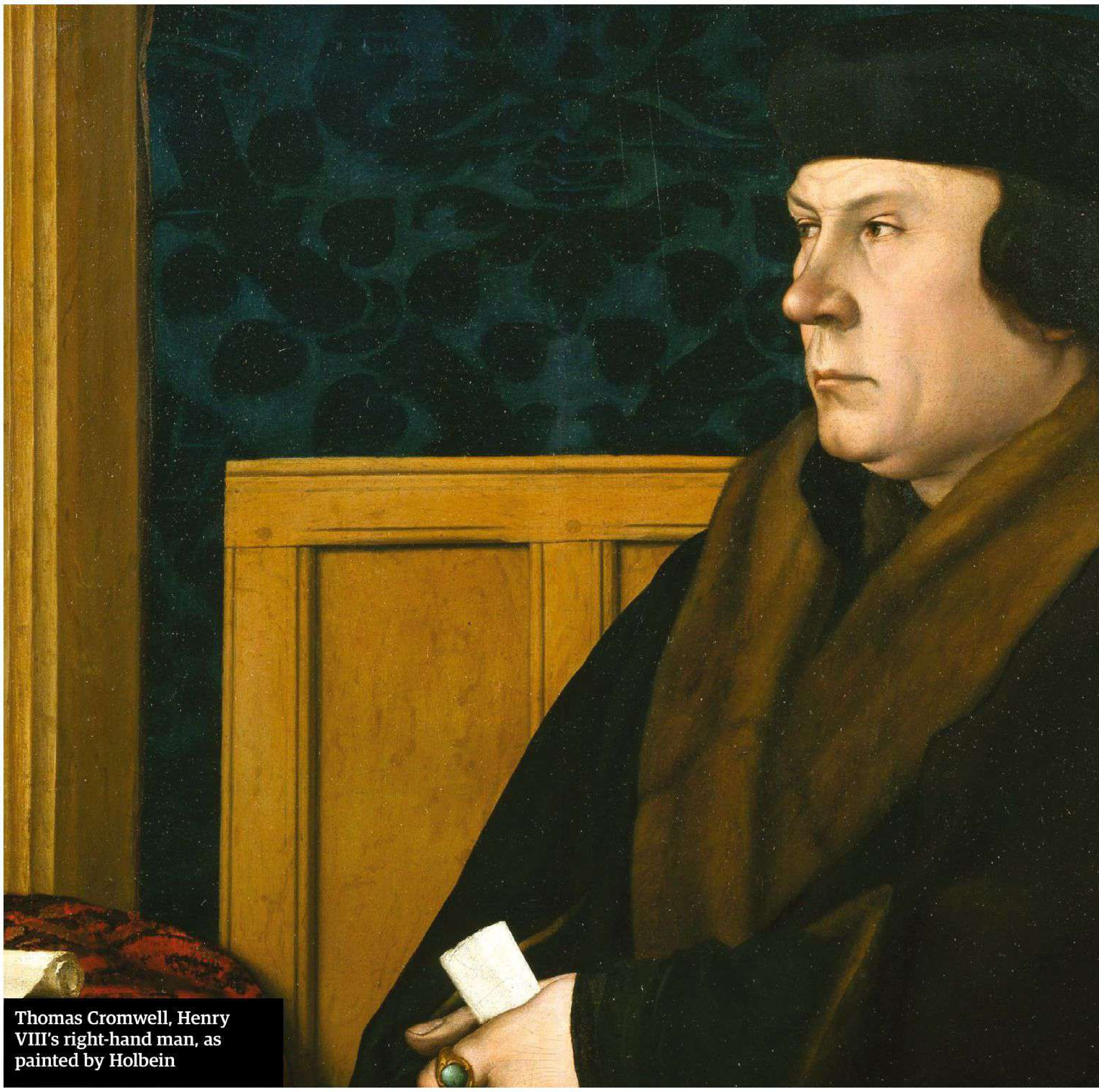


books and pamphlets. Inevitably, the king and his minister had to rely heavily on committed evangelicals to deliver the written and spoken messages designed to win popular support. But how could that be done without involving Henry in accusations of heresy?

The short answer is, it couldn't. To the end of his days, the king considered himself to be an orthodox Catholic, but what he understood by this is difficult to grasp. His beliefs changed over the years and he never steered his realm towards a clearly perceived body of doctrine. Unlike some other European monarchs, he never established a Lutheran, Calvinist or other breakaway church in his kingdom. His convictions were pliable, stemming from whatever served his advantage at the time. This is why political necessities dictated the pace of the Reformation in England.

That pace steadily increased as Henry took three steps aimed at giving his divorce case legitimacy. He appointed a group of scholars to assemble historical evidence in support of royal authority over the Church in England. He sent diplomats abroad to canvas the opinions of foreign scholars, and he elevated Thomas Cranmer, an obscure Cambridge academic, who happened to be in favour of the divorce, to the archbishopric of Canterbury. The Vatican readily acquiesced in the hope of avoiding a complete break.

“Thomas Cromwell was a brilliant, self-made businessman and lawyer”



Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's right-hand man, as painted by Holbein

The trawling of foreign universities and jurists resulted in an apparent majority in favour of independence from Rome. Cranmer presided over a special court to adjudicate on Henry's first marriage and, of course, declared it to be void. Job done!

Well, actually, no. The long-drawn-out campaign, coinciding with the spread of what its enemies dubbed the 'New Learning', was sundering the kingdom into rival camps. The ending of papal 'interference' and the vesting of the succession in the fruit of Queen Anne's womb made necessary a whole raft of parliamentary legislation. Once the fait accompli had been given the support of statute law, it was encumbent upon all Henry's subjects to accede to it – on pain of death. But there were those whose conscience would not allow them to accept the severing of England from western Christendom and Rome.

Prominent among such 'papists' were several members of the monastic orders and other church leaders including Bishop Fisher of Rochester and Sir Thomas More, Henry's friend and chancellor. They had to be dealt with as traitors and so Henry found himself having to sanction the burning of heretics and the capital punishment of traditional Catholics. Emotions ran high on both sides. Henry faced the one thing above all others that he wanted to avoid – the drift back towards that state of civil war that had existed before 1485.

Some of the great magnates were opposed to the king's proceedings, as were most of the religious orders that were major landowners and enjoyed the affection of thousands of ordinary people. How was Henry to assert his authority and maintain peace without backing one side or the other in the religious debate? Left to his own devices, it is extremely unlikely that Henry would have found an answer to that question. Fortunately, he had at his side a remarkable man who was up for the challenge.

Thomas Cromwell was a brilliant, self-made businessman and lawyer who had learned the art of politics in the warring city states of Renaissance Italy, particularly Florence. The republic's internal affairs were dominated by the rivalry between the Medici family and their enemies and it also faced a major external threat from Rome. Cromwell had bought into New Learning, had a leaning towards Lutheranism and believed in a vernacular Bible open to all. Cromwell was a man of religious conviction. John Foxe, his first biographer, writing 20 years after his death, described him as a “soldier and captain of Christ [whose life] was nothing else but a continual care and travail how to advance and further the right knowledge of the gospel and reform of the house of God.”

Along with this emotional commitment went an intellectual clarity and a willingness to pursue his objectives ruthlessly. He saw that reform could only be completed by a ruler wielding absolute power and so Cromwell boosted Henry's authority, urging him to finish the work he had begun. The pope had been banished from England. Now the doctrines upon which papal authority rested must

be rejected. Cromwell was phenomenally industrious. He drafted the legislation that passed through the so-called 'Reformation Parliament' and underpinned Henry's absolutism. He gave it sharp teeth in a new Treasons Act in 1534, which made it a felony to refer to the king in spoken or written words as a "heretic, schismatic, tyrant, infidel or usurper of the crown". Over 300 people were executed as traitors in the 1530s.

The amount of correspondence that flowed daily across Cromwell's desk was prodigious. He was in constant contact with agents throughout the country and diplomats abroad charged with detecting any opposition to the revolutionary policies upon which he had embarked in the name of the king. In 1535, he was appointed vicegerent in spirituals, which gave him a virtual free hand in all church affairs.

Throughout the country, support for the papacy was strongest in the houses of monks and nuns. It was important for the progress of reform that these potential centres of resistance should be neutralised. Apart from popular tales of 'goings on' behind the encircling walls of monasteries and nunneries, there was a widespread resentment of 'lazy religious' who enjoyed a luxurious lifestyle funded by their large, productive estates.

Luther had exposed the monastic vocation as having no biblical justification and Erasmus was among those who ridiculed the religious life. Several continental rulers from Scandinavia to Switzerland had closed monasteries and appropriated their lands.

There was, therefore, plenty of precedent for the investigation of the religious life that Cromwell set in hand. His busy agents soon produced evidence of scandalous or indolent living, much of it, to say the least, exaggerated. The result was the closure of smaller religious houses in 1536.

A special Court of Augmentations was set up to receive the confiscated wealth of the monasteries and supervise the selling-on of buildings and estates. This dispersal of some ex-monastic property to major and aspiring landowners was a masterstroke. It tied in to royal policy influential men who might otherwise have opposed it. A nobleman who had profited from the confiscation of monastic land was unlikely to join in a rebellion aimed at restoring the abbeys.

But a revolution there was and it was the turning point of the English Reformation. In 1536, northern England was convulsed by the Pilgrimage of Grace, the worst crisis Henry ever had to face. What began as a protest against monastic closures and fears that the government had more draconian ideas became a conservative backlash against religious change and the king's 'heretical' councillors. For some weeks, the outcome was touch and go but, by military force and duplicity, the king triumphed over the rebels and ordered bitter reprisals.

The failure of the Pilgrimage of Grace was the spur that the reformers, led by Cromwell and Cranmer, needed to press on with their campaign. The remaining monasteries were earmarked for dissolution and had disappeared by 1540. The evangelical propaganda campaign of sermons and pamphlets was stepped up. Reformists were deliberately appointed to bishoprics and benefices. A doctrinal review was set in hand, which resulted in the publication of *The Institution of a Christian Man* (commonly known as *The Bishops' Book*), taking official doctrine in a reformist direction.

The king, meanwhile, considered himself vindicated by the failure of the northern rising. In October 1537, he received what he believed was divine confirmation when his third wife, Jane Seymour, gave birth to a healthy boy,

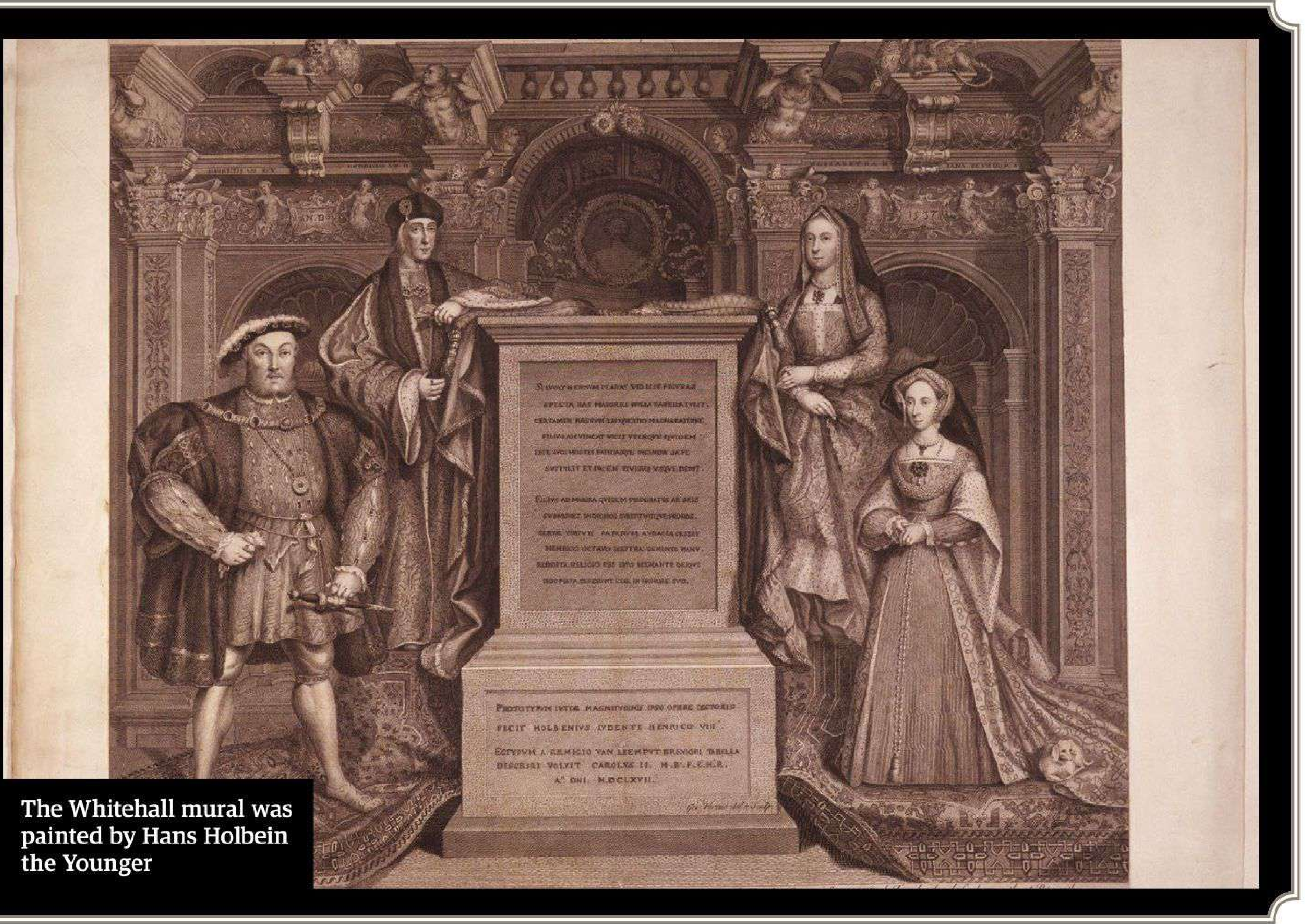
The Whitehall mural

The picture on the wall

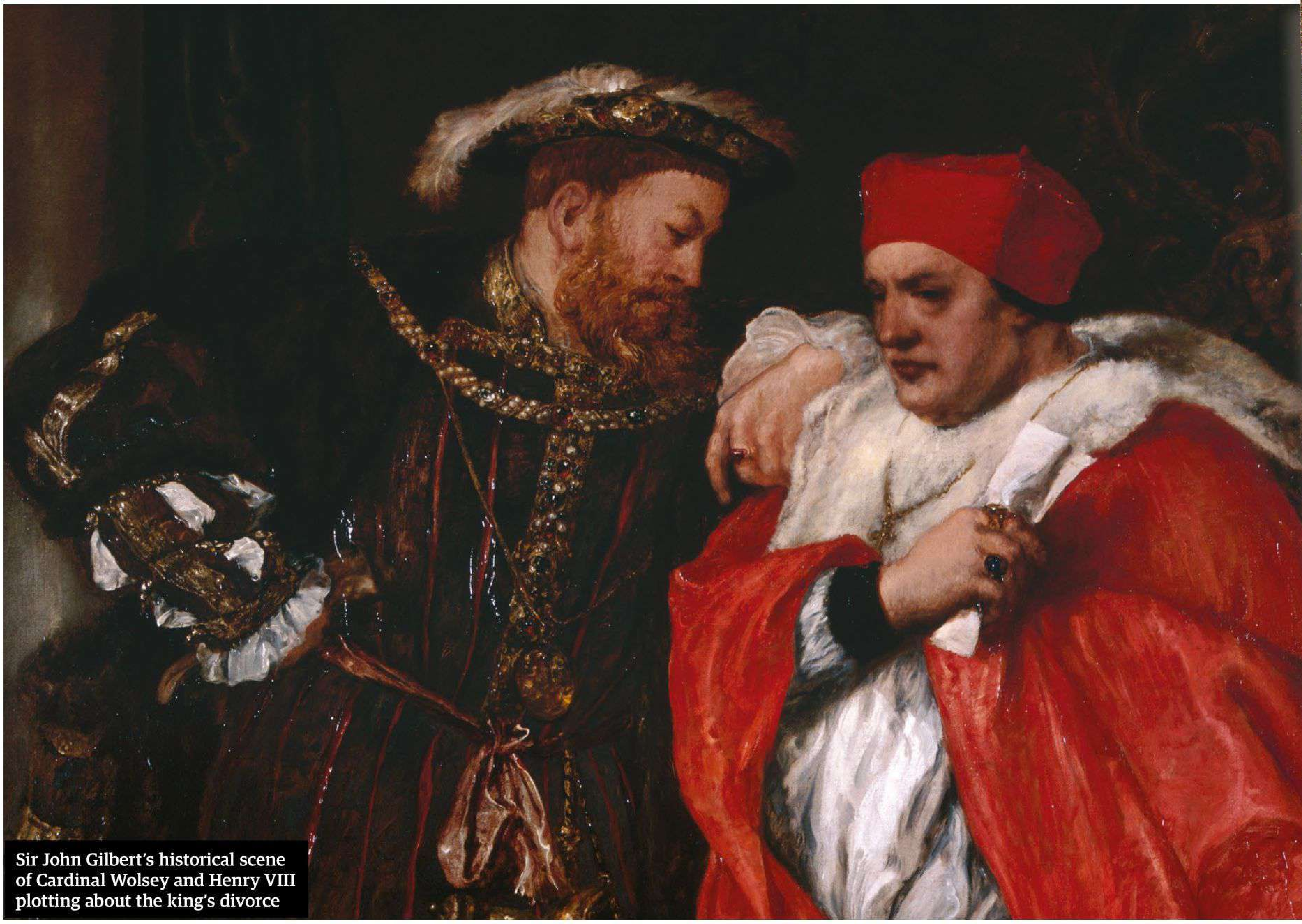
Henry celebrated his victory over the Pilgrimage of Grace by commissioning a lifesize mural for the privy chamber at Whitehall. It was a dynastic statement portraying the king with his parents and current wife arranged around a plinth boasting of the Tudor accomplishments. But the Latin inscription downplayed Henry VII's accomplishments by comparison with his son's. The first Tudor, it declared, was victorious in battle and brought peace to the realm. But his son,

"born for greater things, removed the unworthy from their altars and replaced them by upright men. The arrogance of popes yielded to unerring virtue…"

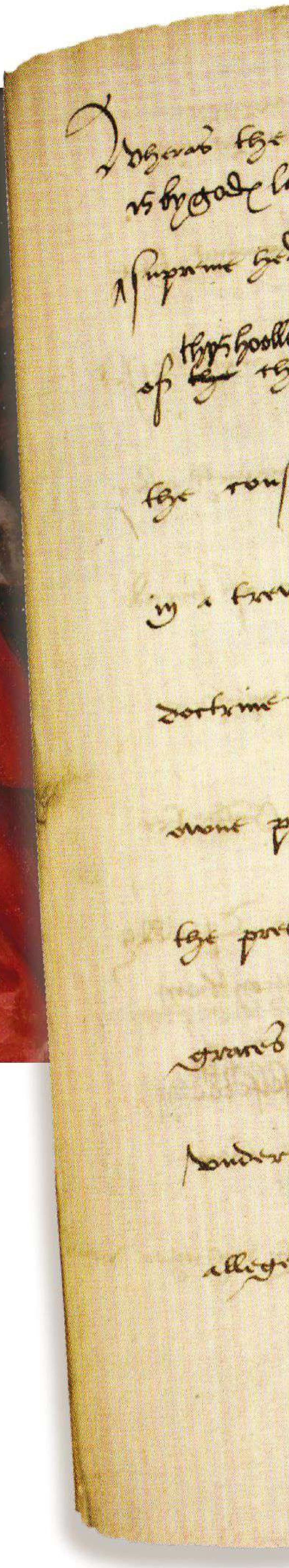
Under King Henry VIII's rule, the eulogy declared, "The doctrines of God have begun to be held in honour."



The Whitehall mural was painted by Hans Holbein the Younger



Sir John Gilbert's historical scene of Cardinal Wolsey and Henry VIII plotting about the king's divorce



though the mother did not survive much longer after her son's birth.

But the road ahead had many twists and turns. The reformers knew that the 'erroneous' old beliefs would be difficult to eradicate as long as so many statues, shrines, wall paintings and other objects of veneration remained in existence. So an iconoclastic campaign was set in hand for the destruction of such objects of 'superstition'.

Many churches and monasteries had made money from the Pilgrimage, displaying supposed holy relics for devout visitors to gaze on. One of the most notorious was the Blood of Hailes, a phial reputed to contain the blood of Christ, displayed at Hailes Abbey in Gloucestershire. Cromwell's agents removed it in 1538 and sent it to London for examination. In a public ceremony in the grounds of Saint Paul's Cathedral, Bishop Hilsey of Rochester denounced the relic as a fake being nothing but "honey clarified and coloured with saffron" before throwing it onto a bonfire.

Negative action by itself could not achieve the reformers' objectives – the people had to be taught evangelical doctrine. Every opportunity was taken to appoint followers of the New Learning to the nation's pulpits and to use the printing press to good effect. Above all, this meant getting an English Bible printed.

This became Cromwell's pet project. He financed translators and foreign printers to produce copies of the book, and he persuaded Henry to allow them to be sold. Needless to say, the translation was anonymous. But what the reformers really longed for was an official English Bible published under royal authority. Achieving this was a risky business.

What became known as the Great Bible was printed in Paris because French craftsmen were more skilled for such a major undertaking. But Catholic snoopers got wind of what was going on and raided the press. Only in the nick of time did Miles Coverdale, Cromwell's agent, and his colleagues manage to sneak pages and plates across the Channel. In 1539, copies rolled off an English press bearing a title page that read:

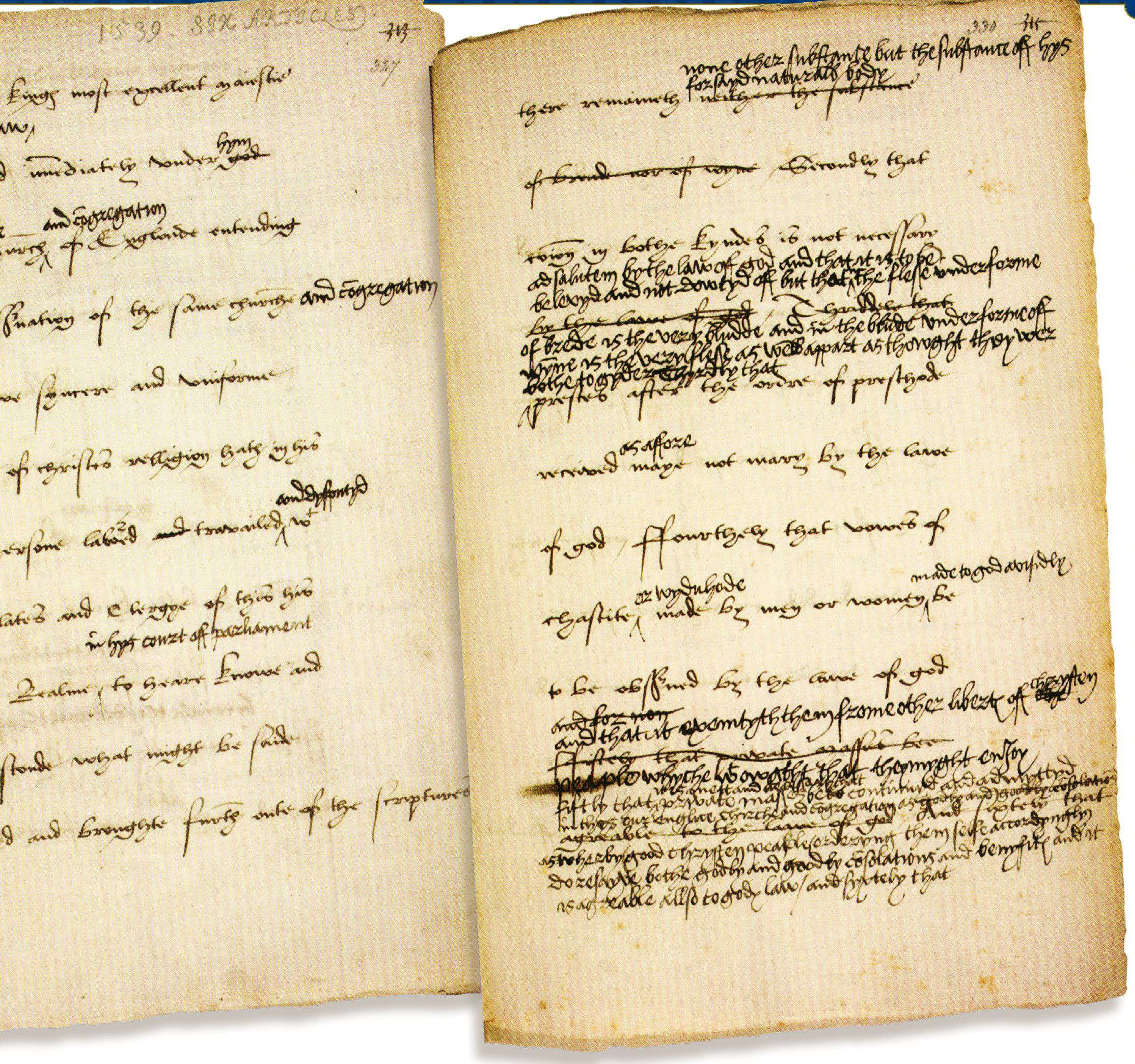
> *"Authorised and appointed by the commandment of our most redoubted prince and sovereign lord King Henry VIII supreme head of this his church and realm of England to be frequented and used in every church within this his said realm."*

This was the king's single most important contribution to the Reformation and within a few years, he regretted it.

The Catholic reactionaries may have been decisively defeated in 1537 but they had not gone away. They were well represented in the house of bishops, among the nobility and in the royal council. Throughout the rest of Henry's reign there was conflict, often violent, between traditionalist and radical factions.

Within weeks of the issue of the Great Bible, the conservative leaders in parliament succeeded in passing the Act Abolishing Diversity of Opinions, otherwise known as the Act of Six Articles. It established a religious litmus test – a set of traditional doctrines to be used in the examination of suspected heretics. Not only was the king increasingly concerned about internal divisions, he needed to demonstrate his orthodoxy to the outside world, and particularly to his fellow European monarchs who were being egged on by Rome to chastise rebellious, schismatic England.

In 1540, the conservatives on the Council achieved a major victory – they had Cromwell arrested and executed for treason and heresy. The minister had tried to forge stronger links between Henry and the Lutheran princes of Germany and



engineered a marriage between the king and Anne, sister of the duke of Cleves. Henry didn't like his bride and this gave Cromwell's enemies the leverage they needed to prise him out of his position of power.

Four years later, they succeeded in getting another reactionary Act onto the statute book. The Act for the Advancement of True Religion tried to restrict access to the Great Bible. It decreed that no women and no men under the rank of gentleman were to read vernacular scriptures. Several people were imprisoned or burned as a result of this anti-heretical legislation and others were driven into exile. Game, set and match for the forces of religious reaction? No. If Henry was not prepared to throw in his lot with the reformers, neither was he going to concede control to Catholic activists. Prosecutions under the Six Articles Act were sporadic because the king not infrequently intervened.

For example, he ordered the authorities in Essex to cease their investigation "until a more commodious time." When Cranmer's enemies launched a major campaign to destroy him, as they had destroyed Cromwell, the king stopped them dead in their tracks.

In the last months of his reign, he thwarted an attempt to have his evangelically inclined last wife, Catherine Parr, arrested. Henry's moods were changeable and became more so in his latter years as pain from his thrombosed legs affected his temper. Councillors, bishops and Justices of the Peace were always on tenterhooks when dealing with suspect heretics, as the Council nervously reported on one occasion, "being loth to offend either by doing too much or too little."

If they were confused, so was the king. His frustration became clear in a famous speech he made to parliament on Christmas Eve 1545:

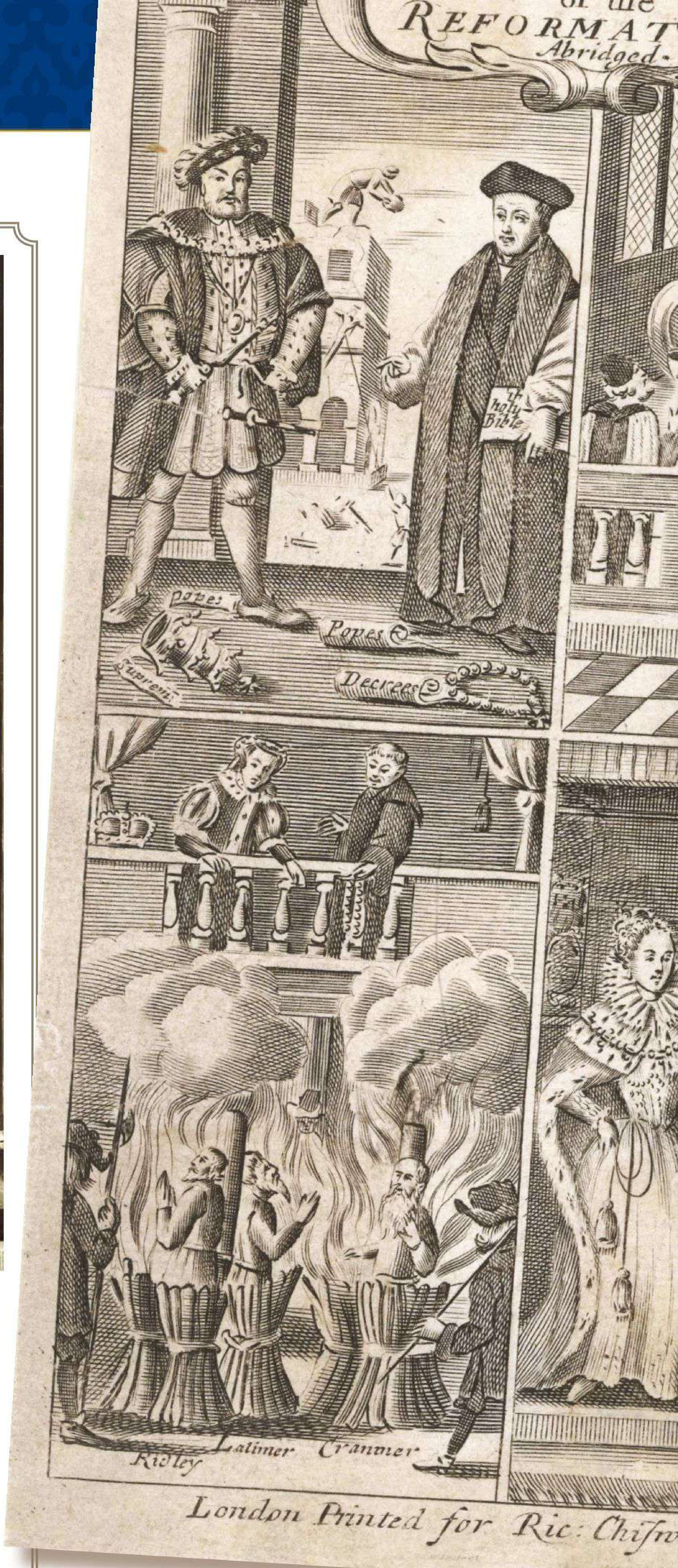
Redefining an English culture

The Reformation might have redefined a nation's religion, but it sounded the death knell for English culture as it was

If Henry's newly reformed worship and theology were to prevail, it would not be enough just to set up a copy of William Tyndale's English vernacular Bible in every parish church around the country. The accumulated 'holy clutter' following centuries of Roman Catholic worship – statues, carvings, wall paintings, miracle-working relics and stained glass windows (though few of these suffered because even zealots did not want to let the wind and rain into their churches, especially in the depths of winter) – had to be removed from the churches. They represented an "idolatrous", "papistical" religion, now out of fashion as a consequence of Henry's wishes.

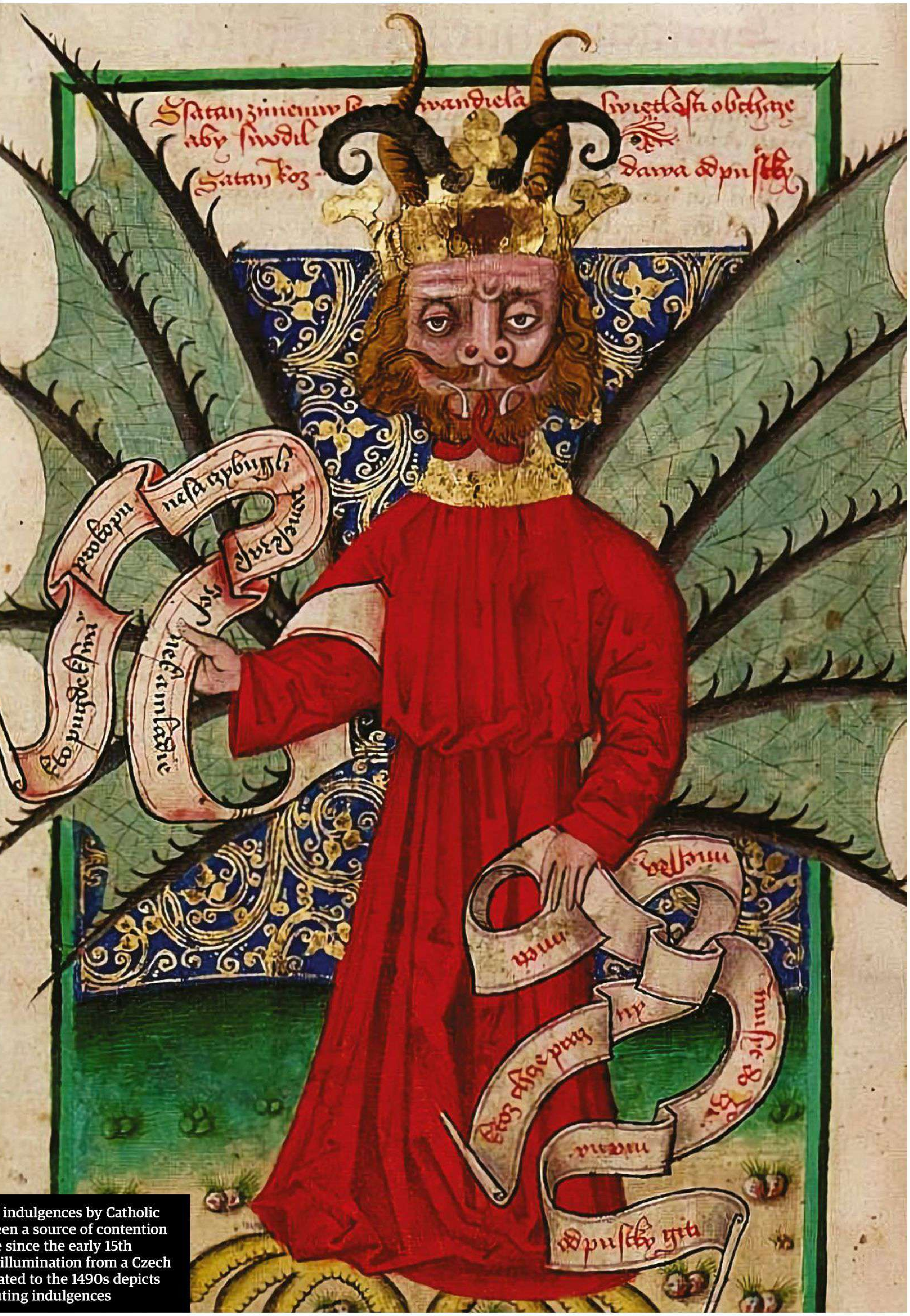
The king's government ordered the taking down or defacing of all "objects of superstition" that might seduce people back to the old, papal, now heretical ways. As well as the 'official' iconoclasm, there were also numerous spontaneous attacks undertaken by vigilantes – those who were furious at having been duped by members of the Catholic clergy into venerating and making donations they could barely afford at jewel-decked altars dedicated to saints, some of who, it was now realised, never actually existed in the first place.

The Henrician purge was only the first of such destructive campaigns. More occurred throughout the remainder of the Tudor dynasty when Edward VI and Elizabeth I were on the throne, and also during the English Civil War of 1642 to 1651 under King Charles I and Oliver Cromwell. Aesthetically, this was a tragedy – but ordinary 16th-century churchgoers tended not think of their buildings of worship primarily as art galleries.



"...what love and charity is amongst you, when the one calleth the other heretic and anabaptist, and he calleth him in turn papist, hypocrite and Pharisee? ... I am very sorry to know and hear how unreverently that most precious jewel, the word of God, is disputed, rhymed, sung, and jangled in every alehouse and tavern, contrary to the true meaning and doctrine of the same; and yet I am even as much sorry that the readers of the same follow it, in doing, so faintly and coldly."

What Henry had discovered and what galled him was that, powerful as he was, he could not command his subjects' consciences. His entreaties changed nothing. When he died in January 1547, he left a nation that was divided and which



The selling of indulgences by Catholic priests had been a source of contention across Europe since the early 15th century. This illumination from a Czech manuscript dated to the 1490s depicts Satan distributing indulgences

remained so for over a century. It was in the reign of his son, Edward VI, that England officially became a Protestant nation. Ironically, that was, in large measure, due to Thomas Cromwell.

The ex-minister had the last laugh. He had always taken the long view and, during his comparatively brief period in power, he had insinuated his own men into positions of influence in church and state. The Council, the court and – more significantly – the household of Prince Edward were well stocked with men of evangelical convictions. It was their party that gained power and took up the work of Reformation during the reign of the sickly boy king.

Should we, in this new light, think in terms of the Edwardian Reformation, rather than the Henrician Reformation of the decades before? I think not. If the see-saw politico-religious life of the 16th century tells us anything, it is that major movements of the human spirit are more powerful even than the tyranny of kings.

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The trial of Anne Boleyn

In May 1536 Henry VIII's second wife and queen was executed by a French swordsman, but what led to her brutal end?

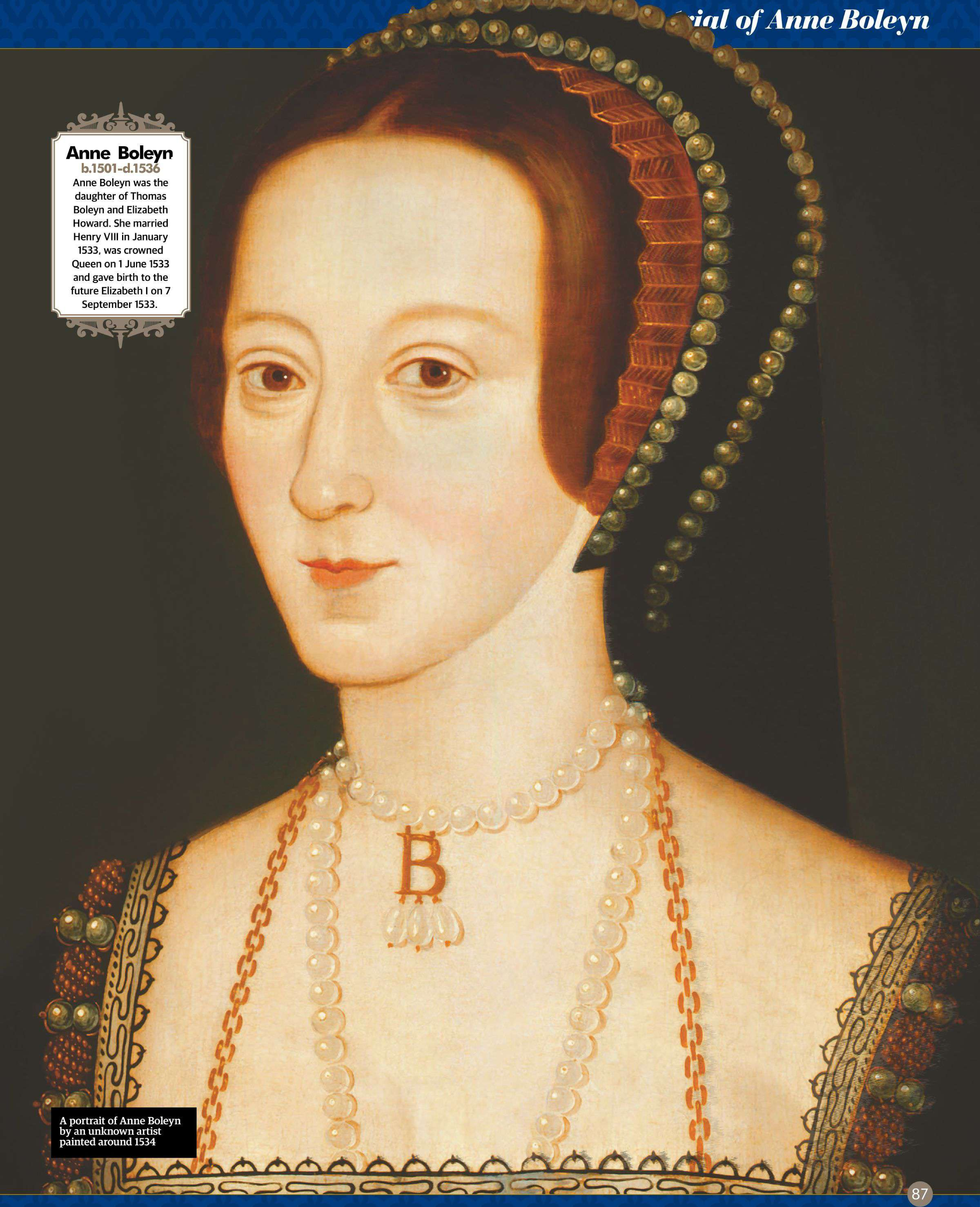
Words CLAIRE RIDGWAY

In 19 May 1536, Anne Boleyn became the first queen in English history to be publicly executed. In June 1533, Anne had stayed in the royal apartments of the Tower of London getting ready for her coronation at Westminster Abbey. Just three years later, she stayed in these same apartments in preparation for her execution as a traitor.

Anne had been coronated with St Edward's crown, one that was usually reserved for monarchs. It was a powerful statement that she was Henry VIII's true queen and the child she was carrying was his legitimate heir. Fast forward to 1536 and while she was imprisoned in the Tower, her husband spent his time gallivanting with ladies. Henry thought so little of Anne that he didn't even provide a coffin: an old chest had to be fetched from the Tower armoury. How could things change so dramatically in only three years?

1536 had started well for Henry and Anne. Anne was pregnant and her nemesis, Catherine of Aragon, had died on 7 January. Henry VIII now had no cause for a quarrel with Emperor Charles V, Catherine's nephew, so there were new foreign policy opportunities, and there was no doubt that Anne was the only Queen of England. But, on 24 January, Henry VIII suffered a serious jousting accident. This brush with death was a reminder of just how important it was for England to have a Prince of Wales. Unfortunately, Anne miscarried 'a male child' four days later. It must have been a huge blow as Anne had already suffered at least one other miscarriage. Was history repeating itself? Was Anne just another Catherine? Henry VIII appears to have thought so, for he said, "I see that God will not give me male children." Anne, on the other hand, blamed the miscarriage on the shock she suffered at the news of Henry's accident and her discovery that he was involved with Jane Seymour. At a time when grief should have brought the royal couple together, blame may well have torn them apart.

While Henry was courting Jane Seymour, one of his wife's maids-of-honour, Anne was making an enemy. She had argued with Thomas Cromwell regarding the dissolution of the monasteries. Cromwell, as Henry's faithful servant, was directing the proceeds to the royal coffers, but she felt that the money would be better spent on education and



Anne Boleyn

b.1501-d.1536

Anne Boleyn was the daughter of Thomas Boleyn and Elizabeth Howard. She married Henry VIII in January 1533, was crowned Queen on 1 June 1533 and gave birth to the future Elizabeth I on 7 September 1533.

A portrait of Anne Boleyn by an unknown artist painted around 1534

Hever Castle in Kent was the childhood home of Anne Boleyn

charitable causes. On Passion Sunday, her almoner preached on the story of Queen Esther, describing how King Ahasuerus had been deceived by his chief adviser Haman into ordering the killing of the Jews after promising that this would bring him riches. Esther changed her husband's mind, saving the Jews. The suggestion was that Anne was Esther, saving the English people and the King from Cromwell's evil intentions.

Three weeks later, on 24 April 1536, Sir Thomas Audley, Henry's Lord Chancellor, set up commissions of oyer and terminer (a commission issued to judges) for the counties of Middlesex and Kent. These were used to prosecute serious criminal offences. A grand jury would investigate the alleged crime and, if there was sufficient evidence, approve a bill of indictment. The commission would then try the defendant. These orders were rare, and no details were given on the crimes, but on 30 April 1536, court musician Mark Smeaton was taken to Thomas Cromwell's house in Stepney for interrogation.

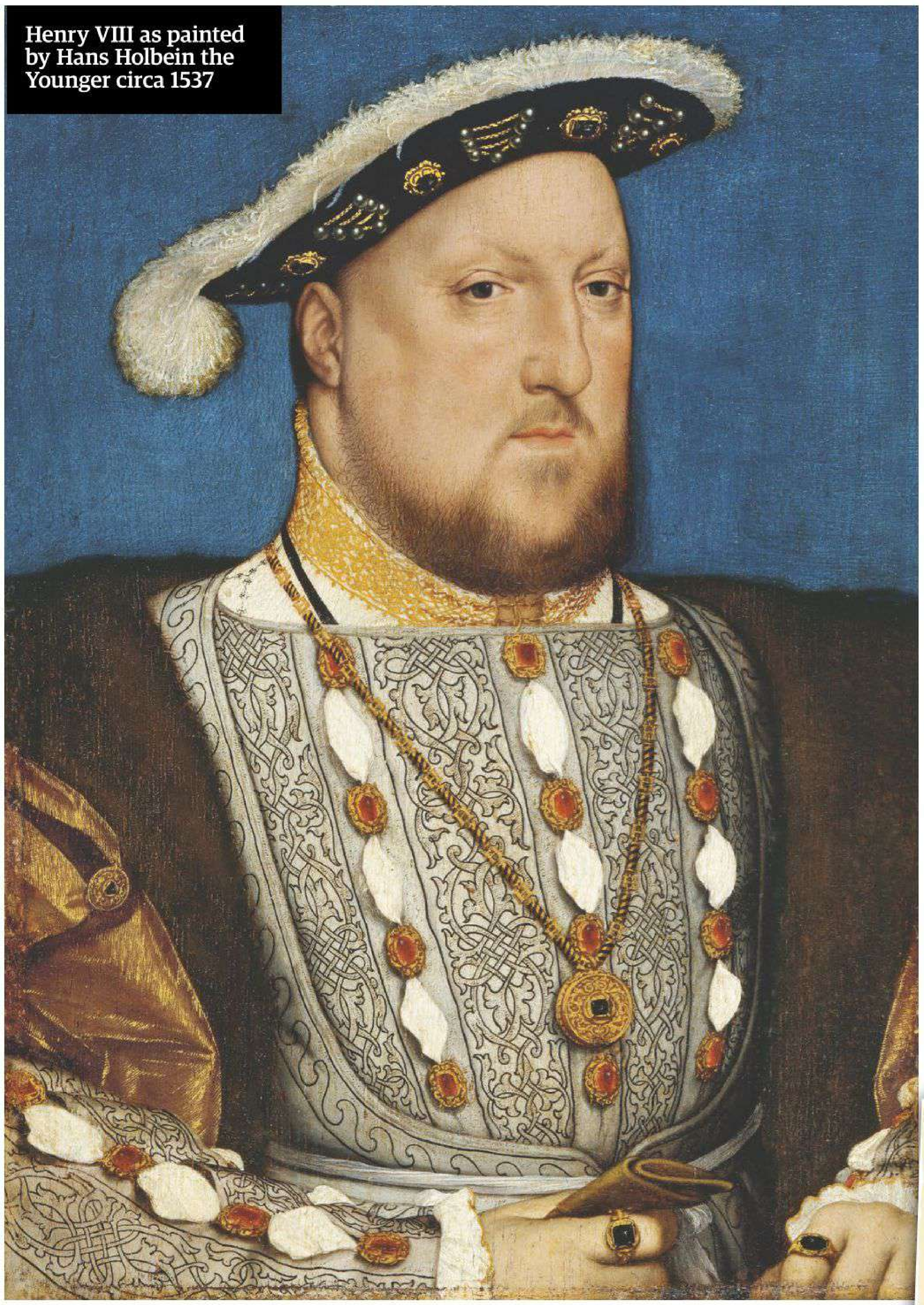
On 1 May, the King and Queen attended the May Day joust. The Queen's brother, George Boleyn, Lord Rochford, led the challengers and Sir Henry Norris, the King's groom of the stool, led the defenders. Everything appeared normal; the King appeared merry and, in an act of chivalry, stepped in and offered Norris his horse when his refused to run.

Suddenly, the King rose and left, taking Norris with him. George Constantine, Norris's servant, recorded that the King interrogated Norris on the way to Westminster, promising him a pardon if he would confess to sleeping with the Queen. A shocked Norris refused to confess, but his pleas of innocence fell on deaf ears. He was committed to the Tower of London the next morning.

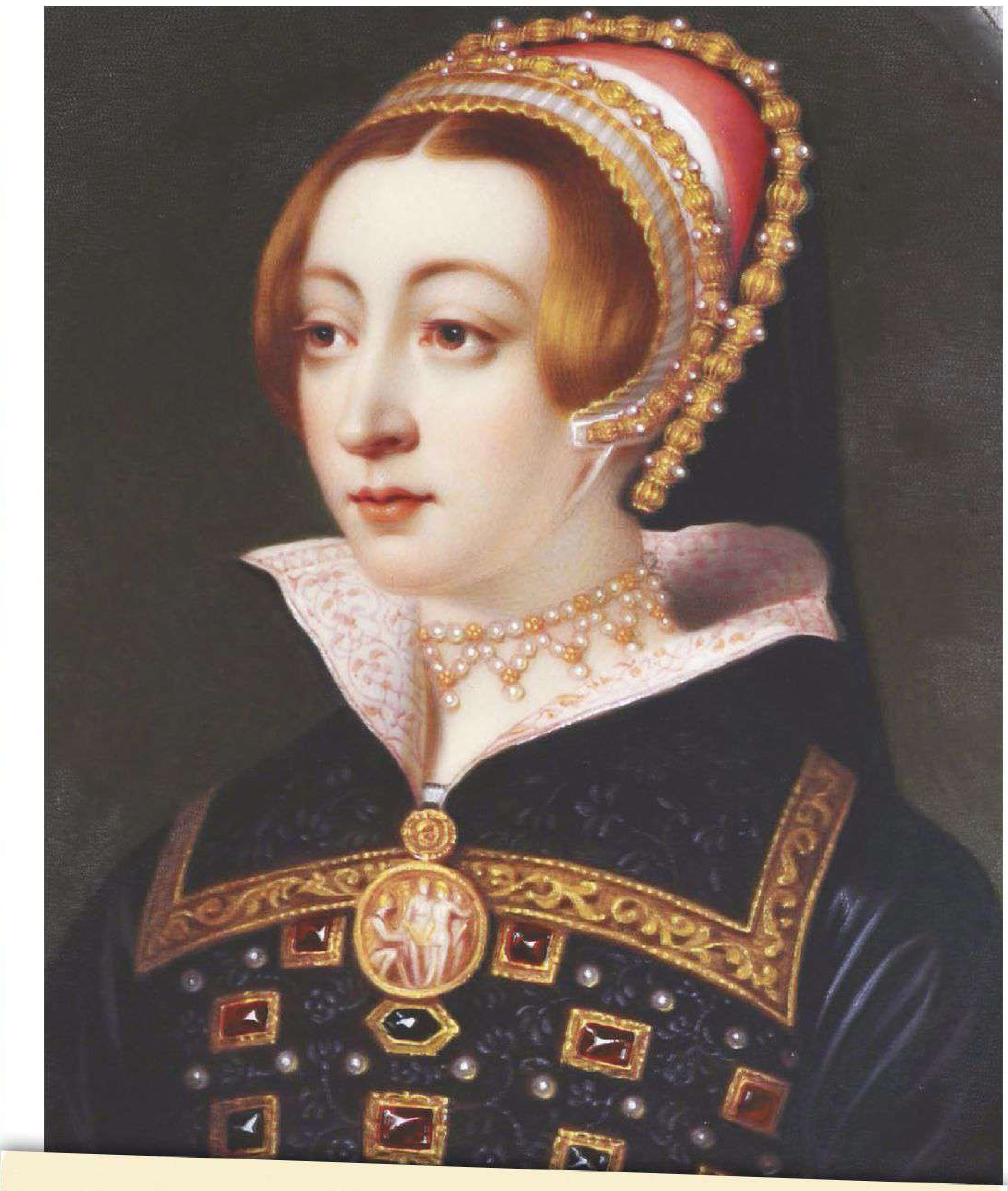
The King's departure may have been caused by news that Mark Smeaton had confessed to sleeping with Anne on three separate occasions. Was his confession coerced? It's impossible to say. The Spanish Chronicle, never the most accurate source, tells of Smeaton being tortured with a rope being tightened gradually around his head, and Constantine recorded that there were rumours that he had been racked. Perhaps Smeaton, like Norris, was offered a deal if he confessed. Whatever happened, Smeaton was taken to the Tower and kept in chains.

On 2 May, Queen Anne Boleyn was watching a game of tennis at Greenwich Palace. A messenger interrupted her, informing her that she was to present herself in the council chamber. There, members of the King's council, headed by her uncle, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, informed her that she stood accused of committing adultery with Mark Smeaton, Sir Henry Norris and an unnamed man. She was told that Norris and Smeaton had confessed. Anne later spoke of how she was "cruelly handled" by the councillors and that her uncle stood there, shaking his head and 'tutting' at her.

While Anne denied everything, her arrest was ordered, and she was escorted to her apartments. By 2pm, the tide of the Thames had turned, allowing Anne to be taken by barge to the Tower. As she entered the Tower, she fell to her knees "beseeching God to help her as she was not guilty of her accusements" and begging the lords who accompanied her to ask the king to be good to her. She was taken to the royal apartments, which would serve as her prison, and appointed ladies whose job was to report to Sir William Kingston, Constable of the Tower, on everything said.



Henry VIII as painted by Hans Holbein the Younger circa 1537

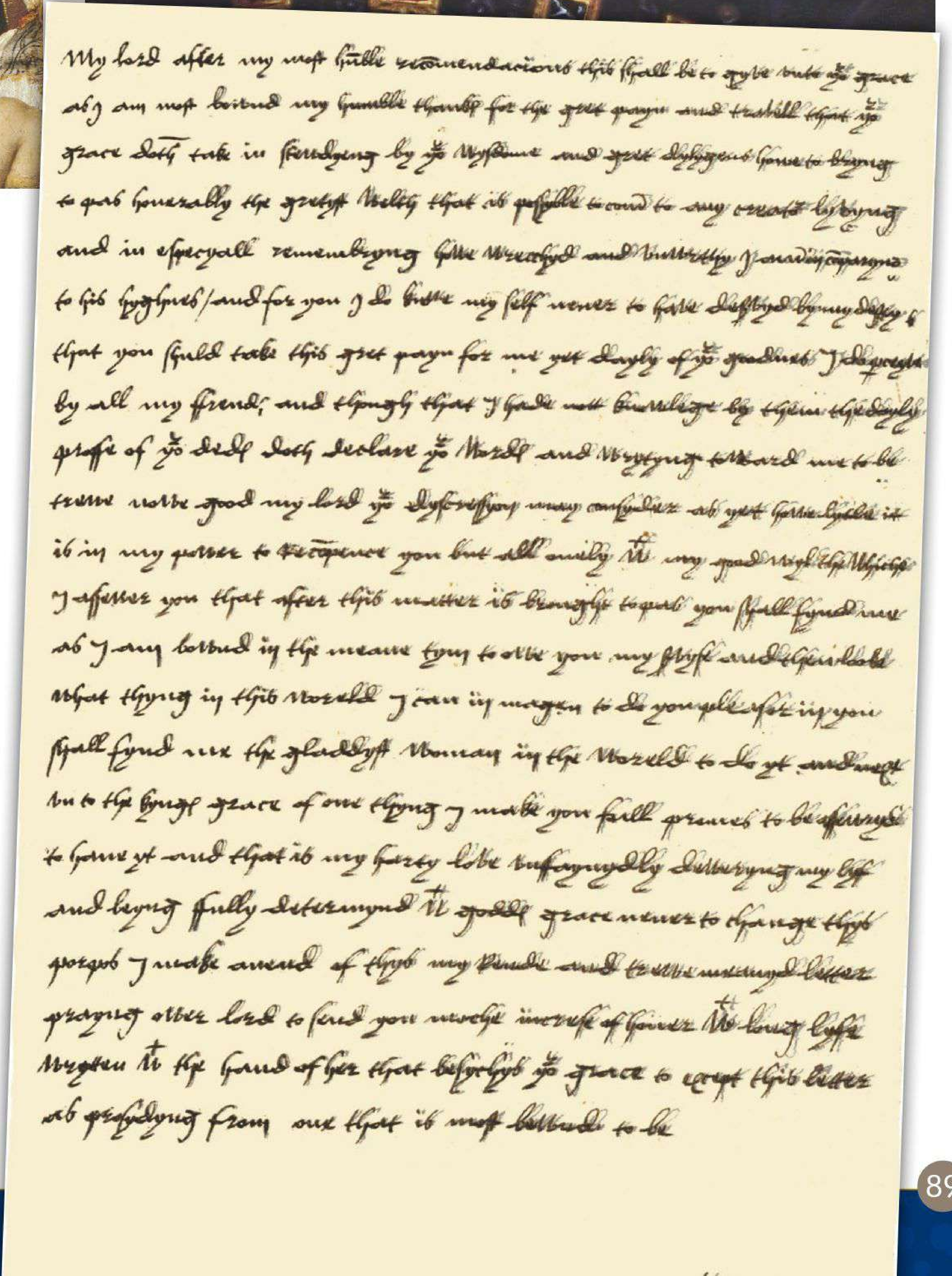


Anne was unaware that her brother had been arrested at Whitehall that afternoon and was already imprisoned in the Tower. It was initially believed that he had been arrested as an accessory to the charges brought against his sister. Eustace Chapuys, the imperial ambassador, reported that, "Her brother is imprisoned for not giving information of her crime," something that would have constituted misprision of treason.

On 4 May, Sir Francis Weston and William Brereton were arrested and imprisoned in the Tower. Weston was young, popular, sporty and a man described as "daintily nourished under the King's wing". He was a royal favourite, and it appears his arrest was down to something Anne said. In trying to understand why she had been arrested, she mentioned that she feared what Weston had to say, recalling how she had rebuked him for flirting with one of her ladies. He'd retorted that he loved someone better than both his wife and the lady in question: Anne. It was a cheeky retort, an innocent flirtation, but it would lead to his death. The wealthy and influential William Brereton was also a royal favourite, having accompanied Henry and Anne on several hunting

ABOVE RIGHT An enamel portrait of Anne Boleyn by Henry Pierce Bone dated 1835

RIGHT A letter from Anne to Cardinal Wolsey thanking him for his promoting of her marriage to Henry VIII



My lord after my most humble recomendacions this shall be to gyve unto yor grace
as I am most bound my humble thanks for the gret payn and travell that yor
grace doth take in stewdyeng by yor wysdome and gret dylygens howe to bryng
to pas honerably the gretyst welth that is possyble to com to any creatoer lyvyng
and in especyall remembryng howe wrechyd and unworthy I am in compareng
to his hyghnes / and for you I do knowe my self never to have deservyd by my dedys
that you shuld take this gret payn for me yet dayly of yor goodnes I do perceyve
by all my frends and though that I hade nott knowlege by them the dayly
proffe of yor dedes doth declare yor words and wrytyng toward me to be
trewe nowe good my lord yor dyscressyon may consyder as yet howe lytyll it
is in my power to recompence you but all onely wt my good wyl the whiche
I assewer you that after this matter is brought to pas you shall fynd me
as I am bownd in the meane tym to owe you my servys and then looke
what thyng in this world I can imagen to do you pleasor in you
shall fynd me the gladdyst woman in the world to do yt and next
unto the kyngs grace of one thyng I make you full promes to be assewryd
to have yt and that is my harty love unfaynydly duryng my lyfe
and beyng fully determynd wt godds grace never to change this
porpos I make anend of this my rewde and trewe meanyd letter
prayng ower lord to send you moche incres of honor wt long lyfe
wryten wt the hand of her that besechys yor grace to acsept this letter
as prosydyng from one that is most bownd to be

> "It was an innocent flirtation, but it would lead to his death"

trips and having received royal grants and offices. He had a colourful reputation, using his influence in North Wales and Cheshire for personal gain and, allegedly, to persecute the innocent. Why he was arrested is not clear, but he had got on Thomas Cromwell's wrong side by opposing his plans for administrative reform in Wales.

By 5 May, the final arrests had been made. Thomas Wyatt the Elder, the poet who had once been in love with Anne Boleyn, had been taken to the Tower, as had Sir Richard Page, a gentleman of the privy chamber and a former favourite of Thomas Cromwell. Sir Francis Bryan, a relative of both Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour, was ordered to London for interrogation. However, he either managed to talk his way out of trouble or the interrogation was a ruse - after all, he was allied with the Seymours and had distanced himself from the Boleyns.

On 10 May, the Grand Jury of Middlesex announced that there was sufficient evidence to suggest that the Queen, Lord Rochford, Sir Henry Norris, Sir Francis Weston, William Brereton and Mark Smeaton were guilty of the charges against them and they should be indicted and sent to trial. The following day, the Grand Jury of Kent made the same ruling. No mention was made of Sir Thomas Wyatt or Sir Richard Page.

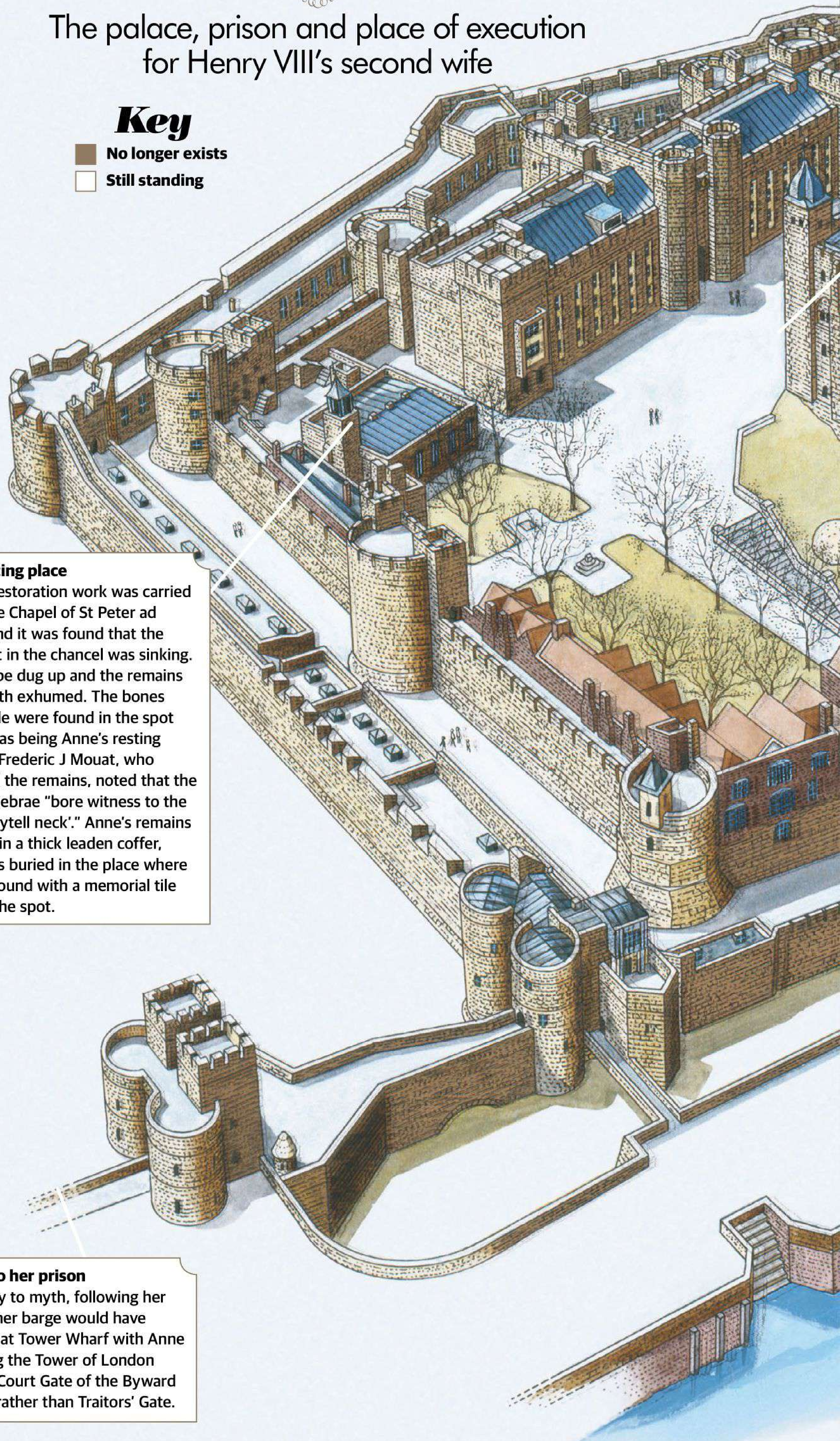
The indictments covered a period between early October 1533, just a month after Anne had given birth to Elizabeth, and January 1536. According to the charges, Anne Boleyn "seduced by evil and not having God before her eyes, and following daily her frail and carnal appetites [...] falsely and traitorously procure by base conversations and kisses, touchings, gifts and other infamous incitations, divers of the King's daily and familiar servants to be her adulterers and concubines, so that several of the King's servants yielded to her vile provocations". Using "kisses, touches and otherwise", she seduced the men "to have illicit intercourse with her", and rewarded them with presents. She also "incited her own natural brother, George Boleyn, knight, Lord Rochford, to violate her, alluring him with her tongue in the said George's mouth, and the said George's tongue in hers, and also with kisses, presents and jewels, against the commands of the Almighty God, and all laws human and divine, whereby he, despising

Anne Boleyn in the Tower of London

The palace, prison and place of execution for Henry VIII's second wife

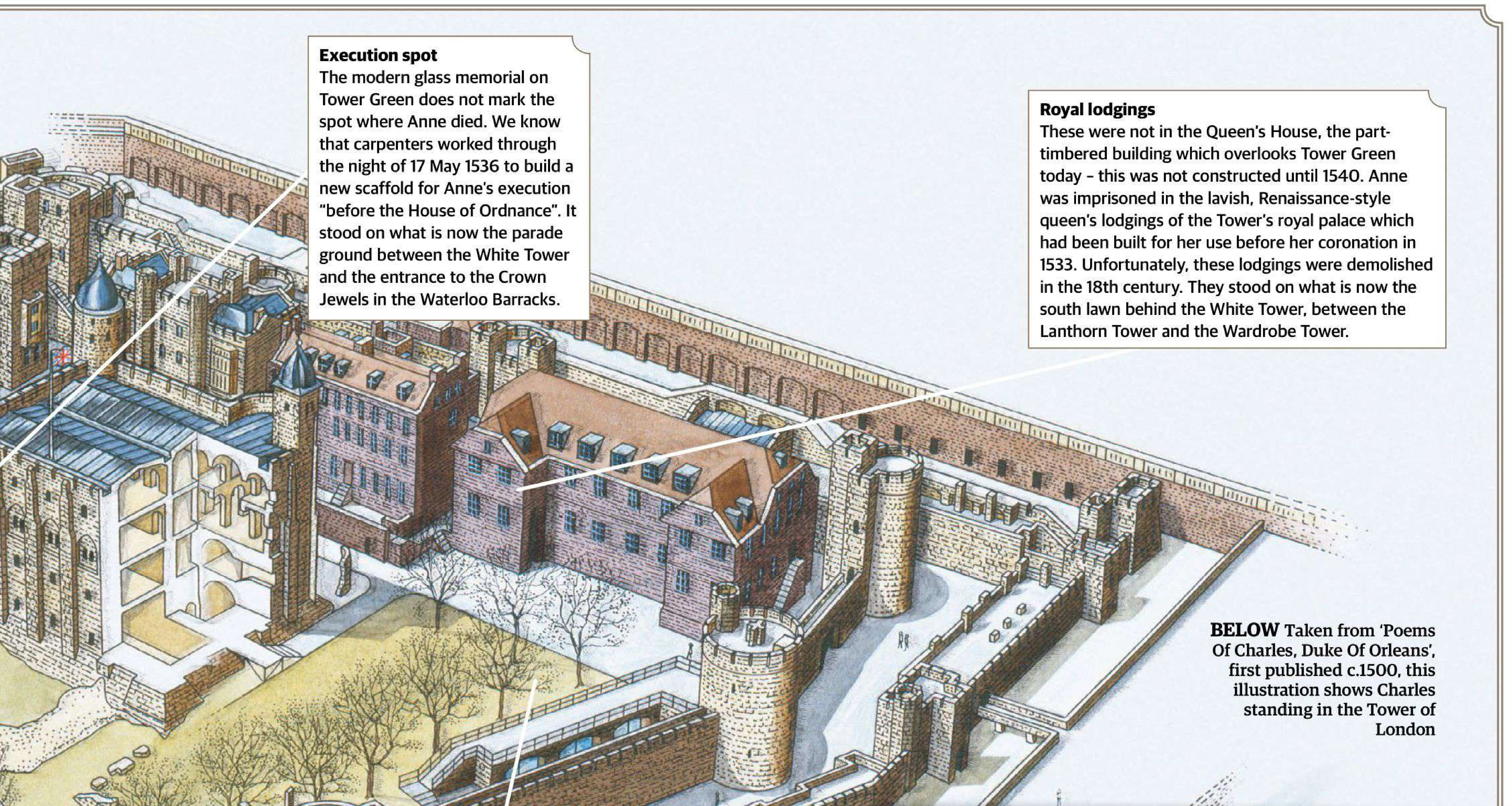
Key

■ No longer exists
☐ Still standing



Final resting place
In 1876, restoration work was carried out on the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula and it was found that the pavement in the chancel was sinking. It had to be dug up and the remains underneath exhumed. The bones of a female were found in the spot recorded as being Anne's resting place. Dr Frederic J Mouat, who examined the remains, noted that the small vertebrae "bore witness to the Queen's 'lytell neck'." Anne's remains were put in a thick leaden coffer, which was buried in the place where she was found with a memorial tile marking the spot.

Entry to her prison
Contrary to myth, following her arrest, her barge would have docked at Tower Wharf with Anne entering the Tower of London via the Court Gate of the Byward Tower, rather than Traitors' Gate.

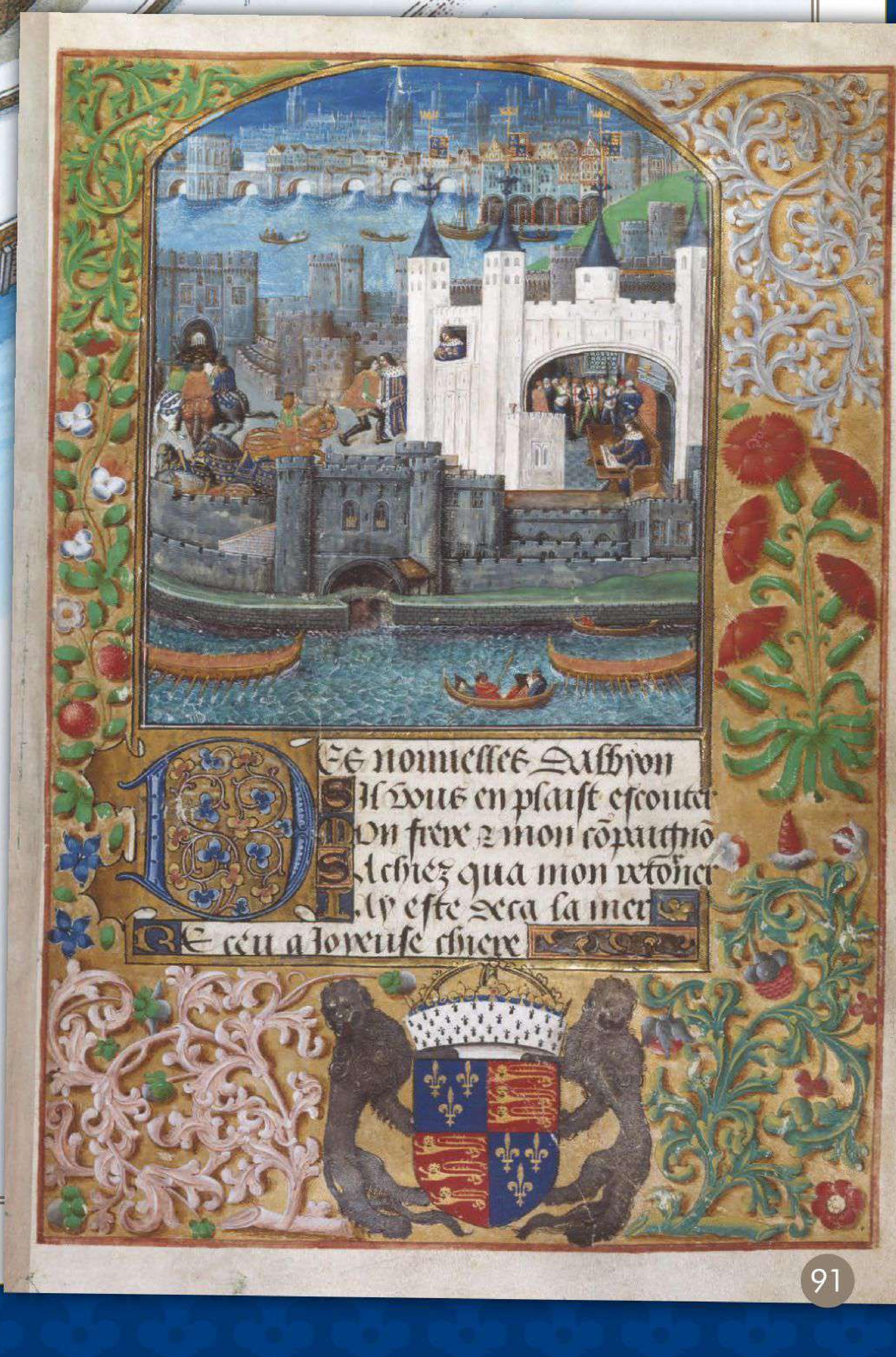


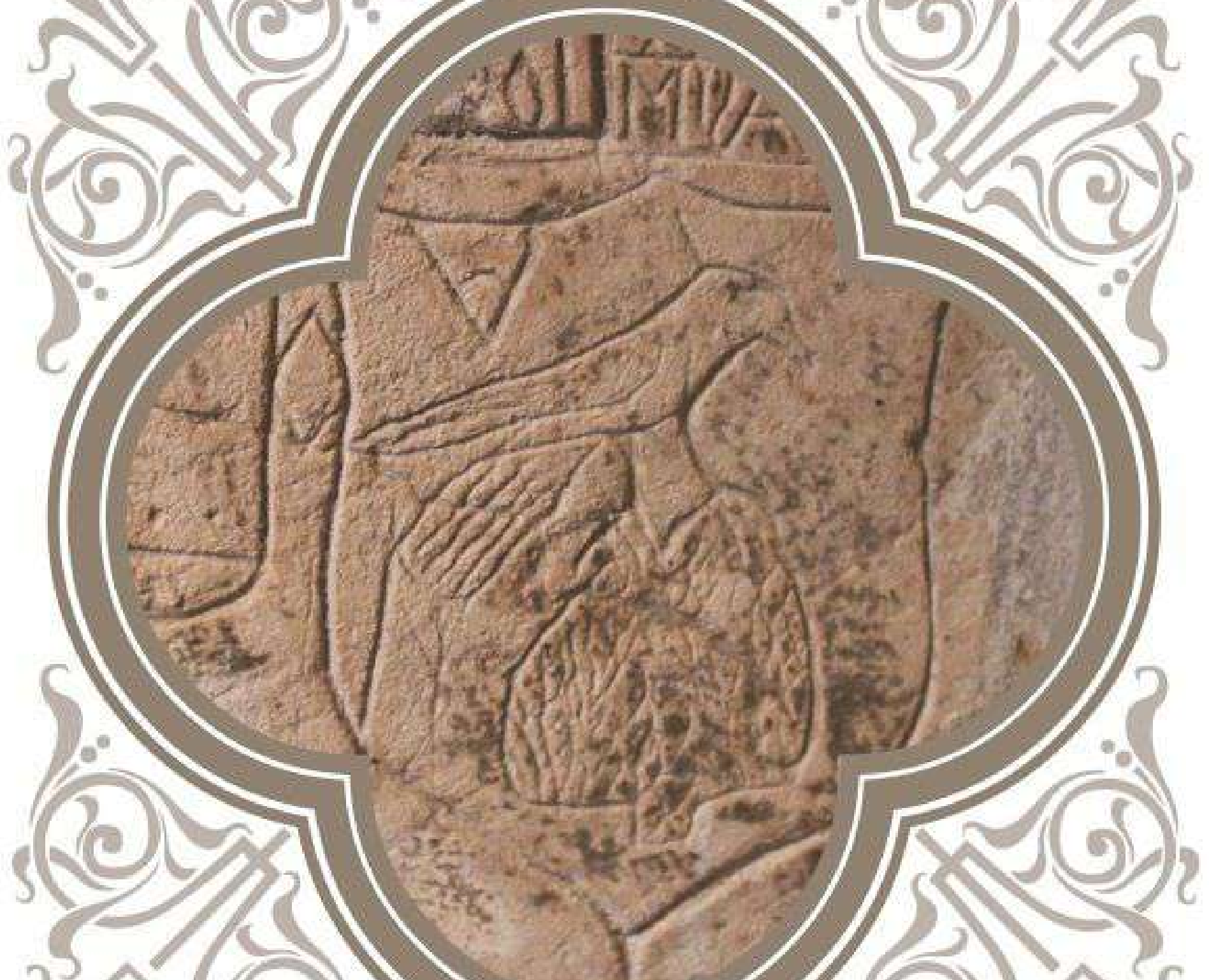
Execution spot
The modern glass memorial on Tower Green does not mark the spot where Anne died. We know that carpenters worked through the night of 17 May 1536 to build a new scaffold for Anne's execution "before the House of Ordnance". It stood on what is now the parade ground between the White Tower and the entrance to the Crown Jewels in the Waterloo Barracks.

Royal lodgings
These were not in the Queen's House, the part-timbered building which overlooks Tower Green today – this was not constructed until 1540. Anne was imprisoned in the lavish, Renaissance-style queen's lodgings of the Tower's royal palace which had been built for her use before her coronation in 1533. Unfortunately, these lodgings were demolished in the 18th century. They stood on what is now the south lawn behind the White Tower, between the Lanthorn Tower and the Wardrobe Tower.

Scene of the trial
Anne and Lord Rochford were tried in the 13th century King's Hall, or Great Hall, of the Tower, which was the focal point of the royal palace. The hall had been refurbished in 1533 and was used by Henry and Anne for her pre-coronation banquet and celebrations.

BELOW Taken from 'Poems Of Charles, Duke Of Orleans', first published c.1500, this illustration shows Charles standing in the Tower of London


Des nouuelles dalbyon
Sil vous en plaist escouter
Mon frere z mon cõpaignõ
Alchiez qua mon retõner
Ily este deca la mer
Receu a ioyeuse chiere



The falcon badge of a fallen queen

A crude stone carving alludes to Anne Boleyn's fall

Anne Boleyn's royal badge was introduced in a tableau at Anne's coronation procession in 1533. The tableau consisted of a castle with a green, and a tree stump out of which red and white roses spilled. A white falcon descended from heaven and landed on the stump, where it was crowned with an imperial crown by an angel wearing armour.

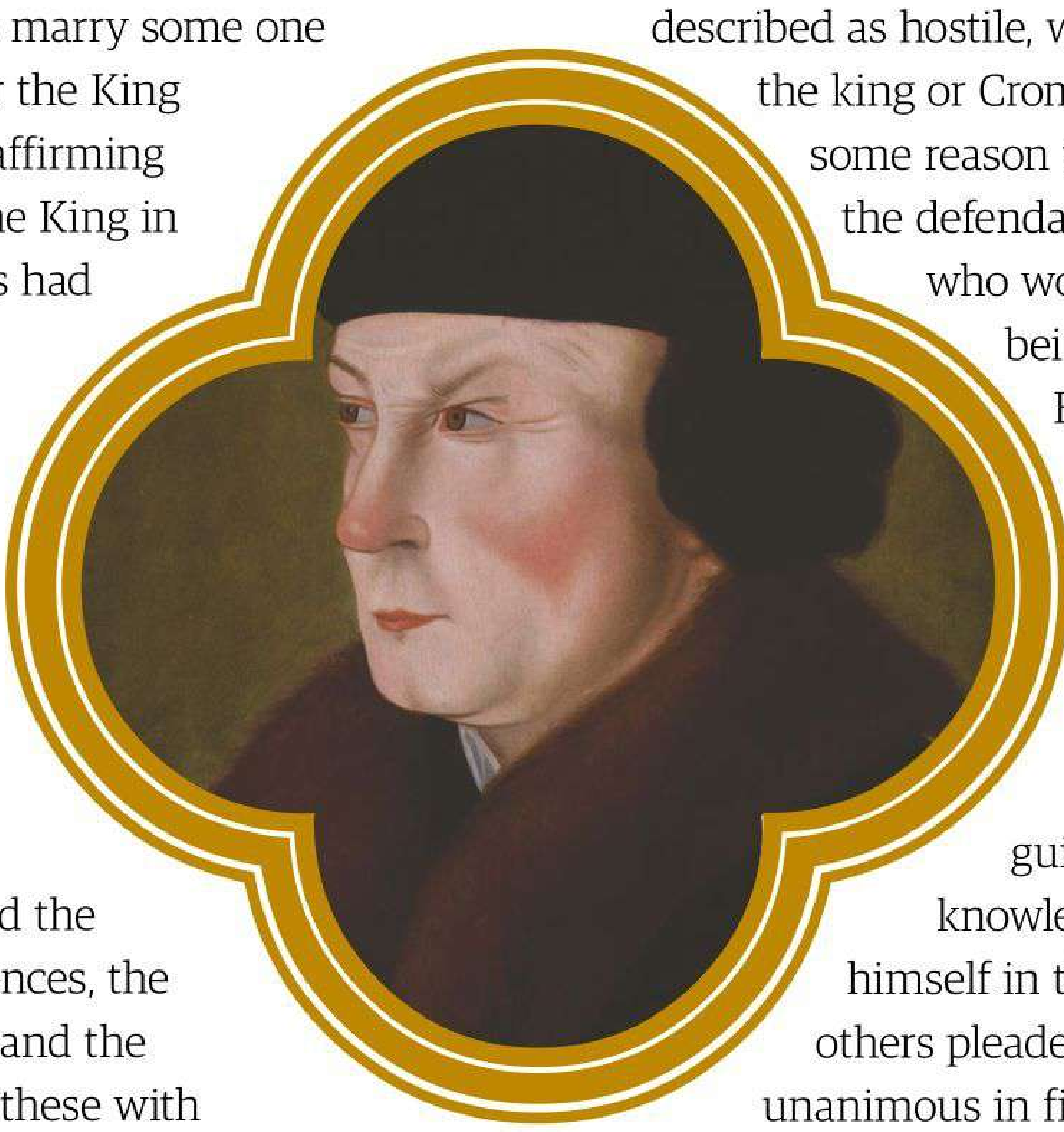
The falcon was a device used by the Butlers of Ireland, Anne's paternal grandmother's family, and in heraldry, it was used as a symbol of majesty and power. Nicholas Udall, the poet who wrote the verses spoken at the tableau, wrote of this falcon being "of body small, of power regal, [...] of courage hault", words that could be used to describe the new queen, and of it having flown for a long time to come to this stump where she could build her nest.

Of course, Anne had waited six years for her coronation. The tree stump was an old royal badge so its use in combination with the red and white roses spoke of Anne's fertility and how she'd provide the barren House of Tudor with a Prince of Wales.

The sceptre alluded to Anne's status as Queen and also her God-given authority. Udall wrote of the "diadem imperial" with which the falcon was crowned, describing how Anne's honour had "cometh from God, and not of man."

A carving of Anne's badge can be found in the Beauchamp Tower of the Tower of London, a place used to house important prisoners in the 16th and 17th centuries. There, on walls covered by Tudor graffiti, is a crude carving of Anne's falcon. It is a poignant carving because in this depiction of her badge, the bird is missing its royal sceptre and imperial crown. It is no royal bird. The carver is unknown, but is seems likely that it was carved by one of the men imprisoned in 1536 at Anne's fall, or a Boleyn supporter.

ENTRY TO THE TRAITORS GATE



ABOVE The Tower of London where Anne was imprisoned in the lead up to her death

LEFT Anne Boleyn is arrested and taken to the Tower having been charged with 'criminal intercourse'

ABOVE INSET Thomas Cromwell facilitated Anne Boleyn's fall from grace

the commands of God, and all other human laws [...] violated and carnally knew the said Queen, his own sister".

The Queen and the men had also "compassed and imagined the King's death" and Anne had "frequently promised to marry some one of the traitors whenever the King should depart this life, affirming she would never love the King in her heart." These crimes had caused "certain harms and perils" to befall the King's "royal body, to the scandal, danger, detriment and derogation of the issue and heirs of the said King and Queen." This was treason.

The indictments listed the dates of the alleged offences, the names of the offenders and the location. By comparing these with contemporary records of where the royal court was during this period, the late historian Eric Ives was able to conclude that three-quarters of the alleged offences can be disproved because the defendants could not have been together. For example, on 6 and 12 October 1533, when Anne was alleged to have been with Norris at Westminster, she was confined to her chambers at Greenwich Palace following childbirth. And in December 1533, when Anne was said to be with Brereton at Hampton Court, the court was at Greenwich. However, the allegations also included the words "and on divers other days and places" and "on several days before and after" meaning that even if the dates were challenged, the indictment was still valid. It also suggested that the defendants had committed more crimes than those listed.

In reality, even if Anne and her lovers could have escaped from court for illicit love-making, a queen consort would not have been able to leave without at least one of her ladies. A queen didn't even sleep alone; a lady would sleep on a pallet in her chamber and not one of Anne's ladies was arrested for helping to hide her crimes. In contrast, in 1541, Catherine Howard met with Thomas Culpeper with the help of her lady-in-waiting, Lady Rochford; both women were executed for treason. It is not plausible that Anne could have had over 20 illicit assignations over a 27-month period without help.

In the modern legal system, defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty and the onus is on the prosecution to prove guilt, but in the 16th century the onus was on the accused to prove their innocence. As you can imagine, it is hard to prove a negative. To compound this, a Tudor defendant was often unaware of the evidence that would be used against them, and sometimes even of the charges against them.

Norris, Weston, Brereton and Smeaton were tried at Westminster Hall on 12 May. Many of the commissioners who sat in judgement can be described as hostile, with many of them owing the king or Cromwell a favour or having some reason to want to be rid of one of the defendants. But there was one juror who wouldn't benefit from them being found guilty: Thomas Boleyn. He must have known that if a guilty verdict was ruled then this would prejudice his son and daughter's forthcoming trials.

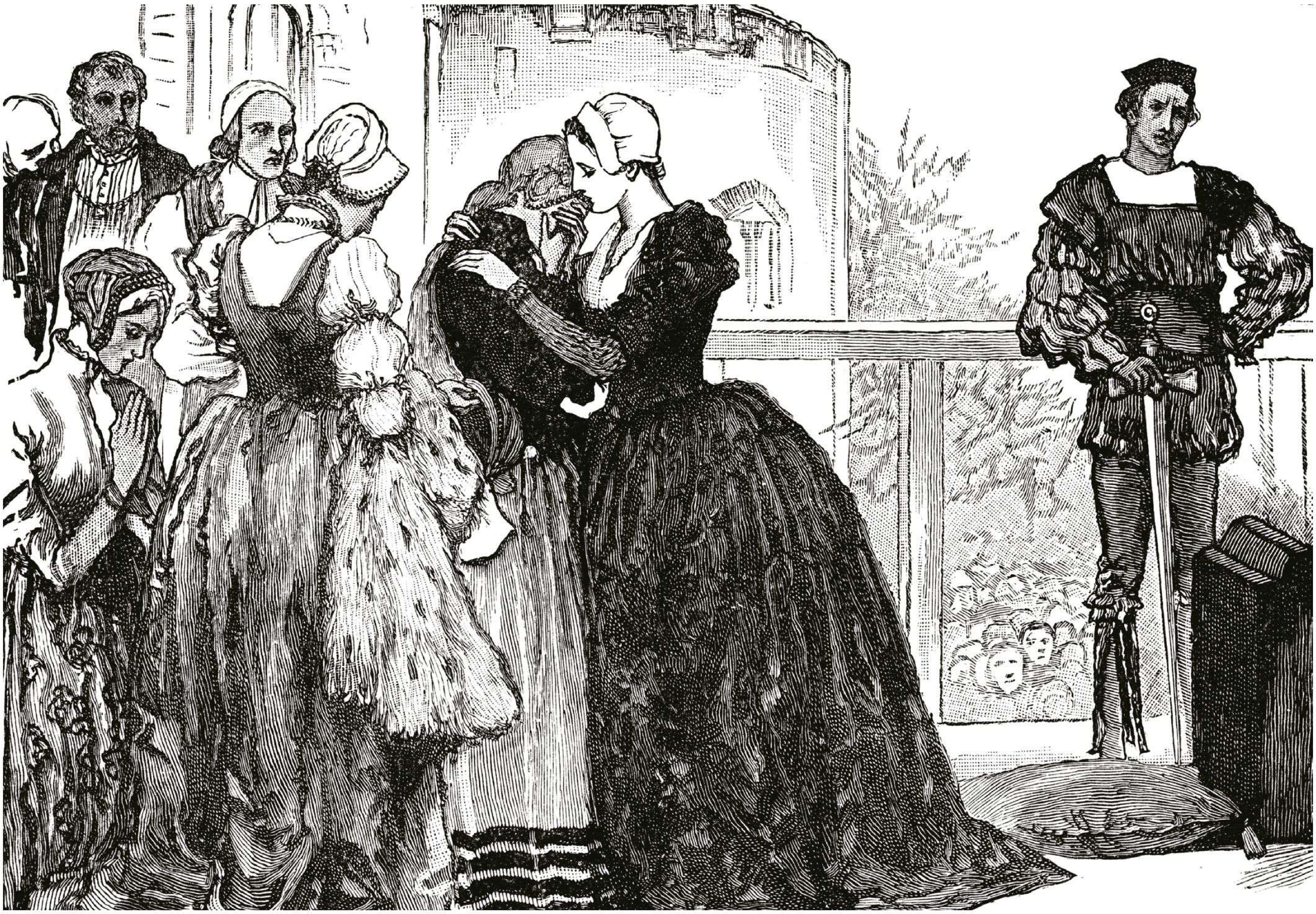
Mark Smeaton "pleaded guilty of violation and carnal knowledge of the Queen, and put himself in the King's mercy", while the others pleaded not guilty. The jury was unanimous in finding all four men guilty of treason, sentencing them to be hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn. Chapuys recorded that Norris, Brereton and Weston were "condemned upon presumption and certain indications, without valid proof or confession."

On 13 May, Anne Boleyn's royal household was broken up, and her staff discharged. The following day, Jane Seymour was moved from outside of London, where she had been sent to prevent gossip, to Chelsea, within a mile of the King's lodgings.

On 15 May, Lord Rochford and the Queen were tried separately in the King's Hall at the Tower of London. As members of the aristocracy, they were given the privilege of being tried by their peers, and although the jury was presided over by their uncle, the Duke of Norfolk, as Lord High Steward, they had no hope of being acquitted. Once more, the jury was a hostile one, consisting of many Boleyn enemies. Each jury member would have known what was expected of him: a guilty verdict.

A great platform had been erected in the hall so that the 2,000 spectators could see the proceedings. Anne Boleyn looked every inch a queen as she entered the hall "with the bearing of one coming to great honour". After the charges had been read out, she pleaded not guilty. No witnesses were called, and it is not clear what evidence the Crown produced against her.

Justice John Spelman, who reported on Anne's trial, wrote, "all the evidence was of bawdery and lechery, so that there was no such whore in the realm". He noted that the matter was disclosed posthumously by Lady Wingfield, a former lady of the Queen's bedchamber. Unfortunately, Spelman's report is damaged and incomplete, but it appears that words of Lady Wingfield had served as



evidence. Of course, she could not be called as a witness to clarify her meaning. Another source names Elizabeth Browne, Lady Worcester, as providing evidence against Anne. In an argument with her brother, a member of the King's privy chamber, Lady Worcester is said to have defended her morality by saying that she "was no worse than the Queen who had offended with Mark Smeaton and her own brother". There is, however, no record of Lady Worcester being at court and Spelman makes no mention of her.

Nothing seemed to faze Anne. The chronicler Charles Wriothesley recorded that she "made so wise and discreet answers to all things laid against her, excusing herself with her words so clearly, as though she had never been faulty to the same." Despite her wise answers, the jury was unanimous in their guilty verdict. Her uncle pronounced sentence, tears streaming down his face, stating that she would either be burnt at the stake or beheaded, according to the "King's pleasure".

After Anne had been escorted out of the hall, her brother, Lord Rochford, was brought to the bar and likewise charged with high treason. Like his sister, he defended himself admirably. Charles Wriothesley recorded, "He made answers so prudently and wisely to all articles laid against him, that marvel it was to hear, and never would confess anything, but made himself as clear as though he had never offended." Chapuys corroborated this, stating, "To all he replied so well that several of those present wagered ten to one that he would be acquitted, especially as no witnesses were produced against either him or her [...]". Rochford knew, however, that he had no chance of justice. When he was handed a note with a warning not to repeat the contents, he read it aloud.

According to the note, the queen had told Rochford's wife that the king was impotent. Rochford declared to the court that he would not "arouse any suspicion which might prejudice the King's issue". Regarding the charge that he had committed incest, "no proof of guilt was produced except that of his having once passed many hours in her company, and other little follies." From the accounts of his trial, it appears that the case against Rochford was weak – no witnesses were called, and the evidence amounted to hearsay – yet the jury was unanimous in finding him guilty. Rochford was sentenced to a full traitor's death, to be hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn. Rochford accepted his sentence stoically, his only reaction being to beg that the King would arrange the payment of his debts out of the goods seized from him.

On 17 May 1536, Rochford, Norris, Weston, Brereton and Smeaton were escorted to the scaffold on Tower Hill. Weston's mother petitioned the King, offering "rents and goods for his deliverance", which would have amounted to

+ Queen Anne Boleyn MDXXXVI

LEFT The memorial tile for Anne Boleyn in the chapel of St Peter ad Vincula, Tower of London

OPPOSITE INSET Jane Seymour as painted by Hans Holbein the Younger

OPPOSITE Anne bids a final farewell to her ladies in waiting

100,000 crowns, and the French ambassadors pleaded for him, to no avail. However, in his 'mercy', the King commuted the men's sentences to beheading.

It was important to die a 'good death' - to accept that you were a sinner deserving of death, regardless of whether you were innocent of the charges. You were expected to accept the law and judgement, and to praise the monarch. The men were executed in order of rank. Lord Rochford followed convention, acknowledging that he had been "judged under the law, and die under the law, and the law has condemned me", but then he took the opportunity to preach to the crowd, urging those witnessing his death to "stick to the truth and follow it", confessing that he had read God's word but "did not follow it" and it had brought him to his death. "One good follower is worth three readers", was his sage advice. Norris was next, and George Constantine recorded how all the men confessed to deserving death, "All but Mr Norice, who sayed almost nothinge at all." Weston, Brereton and Smeaton followed suit.

Anne was shocked when she heard that Smeaton did not make any effort to retract his confession: "Did he not exonerate me [...] before he died, of the public infamy he laid on me? Alas! I fear his soul will suffer for it."

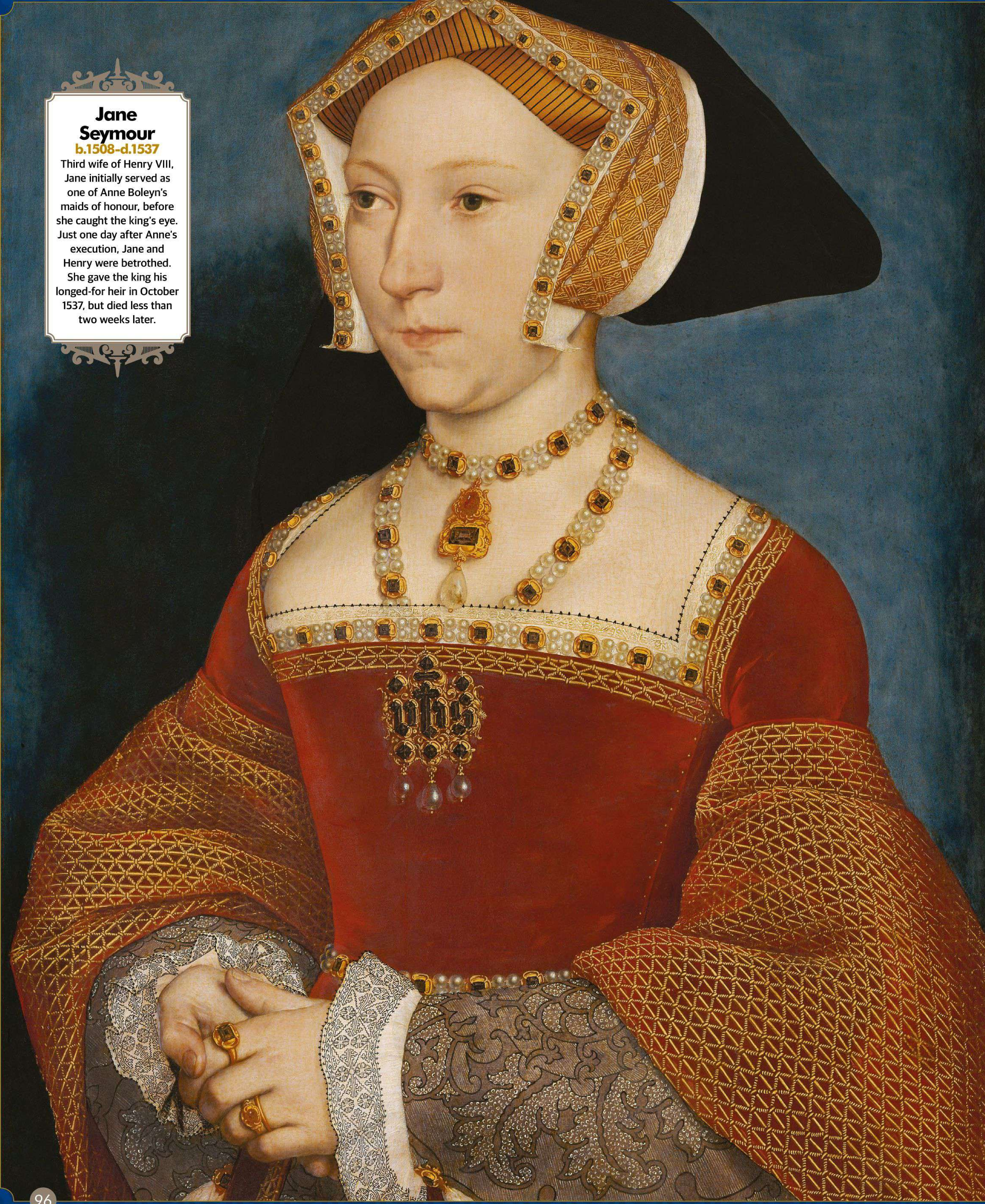
Her execution had been scheduled for 18 May so she prepared herself by spending the night in prayer. She made her last confession and celebrated the Mass in front of Sir William Kingston, swearing twice on the sacrament that she had never been unfaithful to the King. Anne waited, only to be told that her execution had been postponed until the following day. Anne's dignified demeanour, the way she comforted her ladies and joked about her "little neck" led to Kingston reporting that she had "much joy and pleasure in death".

Finally, at 8am on 19 May, Kingston informed Anne that the time of her death was near. Anne was ready. She had taken great care with her outfit; her ermine trim showed her royal status and her kirtle was crimson, the colour of martyrdom, and, to top it off, she wore a traditional English gable hood. On the scaffold, she made a simple speech, sticking to execution protocol, before paying the visibly distressed swordsman of Calais and forgiving him for what he was about to do. A blindfolded Anne sank to her knees, praying: "O Lord have mercy on me, to God I commend my soul. To Jesus Christ I commend my soul; Lord Jesus receive my soul." The executioner, famed for his skill, took her head off with one stroke, and her ladies wrapped her remains in a white cloth before taking them to the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula. Cannons were fired to announce the queen's death to the people of London. On that same day, Archbishop Cranmer issued a dispensation for Henry VIII to marry Jane Seymour, which he did 11 days later.

Thomas Wyatt, who was released from the Tower along with Sir Richard Page, knew Anne and the men well, and it is clear from his poems that he considered them innocent. He knew, however, that "circa regna tonat", "about the throne, the thunder rolls", and that innocence did not protect anyone at the English court:

"By proof, I say, there did I learn:
Wit helpeth not defence too yerne,
Of innocency to plead or prate.
Bear low, therefore, give God the stern,
For sure, circa Regna tonat."

© Alamy; Getty Images; Tim Ridgway; Mary Evans



Jane Seymour

b.1508-d.1537

Third wife of Henry VIII, Jane initially served as one of Anne Boleyn's maids of honour, before she caught the king's eye. Just one day after Anne's execution, Jane and Henry were betrothed. She gave the king his longed-for heir in October 1537, but died less than two weeks later.

The true wife
Jane Seymour

How one woman rose from humble origins to become King Henry VIII's favourite wife

Words JESSICA LEGGETT

Out of all of King Henry VIII's six wives, it is said that Jane Seymour, his third wife, was his most beloved. In spite of this, perhaps because her time as queen was brief, Jane's story is often overshadowed by the scandalous drama surrounding Henry's divorce and the spectacular rise and fall of her predecessor, Anne Boleyn. So just how did Jane Seymour become Henry's so-called true love?

For a queen of England, Jane had humble beginnings. The daughter of Sir John Seymour and Margery Wentworth - members of the gentry - Jane grew up at Wolf Hall, the family home in Wiltshire. Her date of birth remains a mystery, but it is commonly believed she was born around 1508.

Much like Jane's birthday, there is little surviving evidence to suggest what kind of a formal education she received as a child - in fact, there are scarcely any records of her life before her time at the royal court at all. Consequently, she is frequently labelled as uneducated even though she was in fact literate. However, we do know she received a typical education of the household, and was skilled in needlework and embroidery.

The term 'plain Jane' seems to be the perfect embodiment of Henry's third wife. The imperial ambassador at court, and ally of Catherine of Aragon, Eustace Chapuys famously stated that Jane was "no great beauty", this perhaps evident due to the fact that her younger sister, Elizabeth, married before her. Even in her portraiture, Jane appears rather ordinary - though our modern interpretation of beauty probably differs from that of the Tudors.

Jane was around 19 years old when she arrived at court to join Catherine's household, a relatively old age to enter the courtly game. How Jane earned her place is unknown, but it is usually attributed to either her father or to her kinsman, Sir Francis Bryan, an influential courtier. Regardless of which is correct, we know that by 1531, Jane was a member of the royal court.

During her time in Catherine's household, it is clear that Jane remained in obscurity while her second cousin, Anne Boleyn, commanded all the attention. Thanks to her position, Jane had a front-row seat to the chaos and turmoil which soon descended with the king's 'Great Matter.' Henry's wife and his mistress were not-so-secretly battling each other, a situation that was exacerbated when Anne Boleyn formed her own household worthy to rival Catherine's.

Jane, along with the rest of Catherine's ladies-in-waiting, was in an extremely difficult situation. Not only did she have to remain loyal to the queen she had come to love and respect, but she also had to take care not to offend the woman who had clearly become the king's all-consuming obsession. It was a thin – and dangerous – line Jane had to navigate.

After trying to rid himself of his queen, Henry had lost his patience and exiled Catherine to the rundown palace The More, located in Hertfordshire, sometime around 1531. As the queen took her household with her, Jane was faced with uncertainty over her future and place at court, which depended on her mistress.

After two years in limbo, Henry made the astonishing announcement that he had married Anne and his marriage to Catherine was officially void. At this point Catherine was stripped of her title and privileges as queen, which included paying for her household.

Jane, along with the majority of Catherine's household, was forced to leave and return home. Her future looked rather bleak, as she was now in her mid-twenties with little to no marriage prospects. For a short time, it seemed that luck was finally on Jane's side as she briefly became engaged to William Dormer, son of Sir Robert Dormer, and who incidentally would go on to become an esteemed knight himself.

Although Jane's feelings regarding the match are unknown, it is likely she felt relieved and maybe even happy. After all, to have reached her age and remain unmarried in the 16th century was essentially a path to spinsterhood, which was not a future desired by many women at the time.

Yet as it turned out, Jane would have her engagement cruelly ripped away. The Dormers had decided that she was not an advantageous bride, hailing from a large gentry family considered of inferior birth, with little spare cash to offer a decent dowry. With the end of her engagement to William, Jane had no options for marriage, nor did she have an immediate way to return to the glamorous Tudor court. Instead, she remained languishing at Wolf Hall, unaware of what lay ahead.

> "Henry had begun to openly court his new, mild-mannered mistress"

While Jane stayed at the family home her eldest brother, Edward Seymour, had made a name for himself at Henry's court. It is perhaps because of Edward and his rise in status that Jane found herself appointed to Anne Boleyn's household in 1535 and therefore able to return to court – but once she arrived, it was clear to see the atmosphere had changed once again.

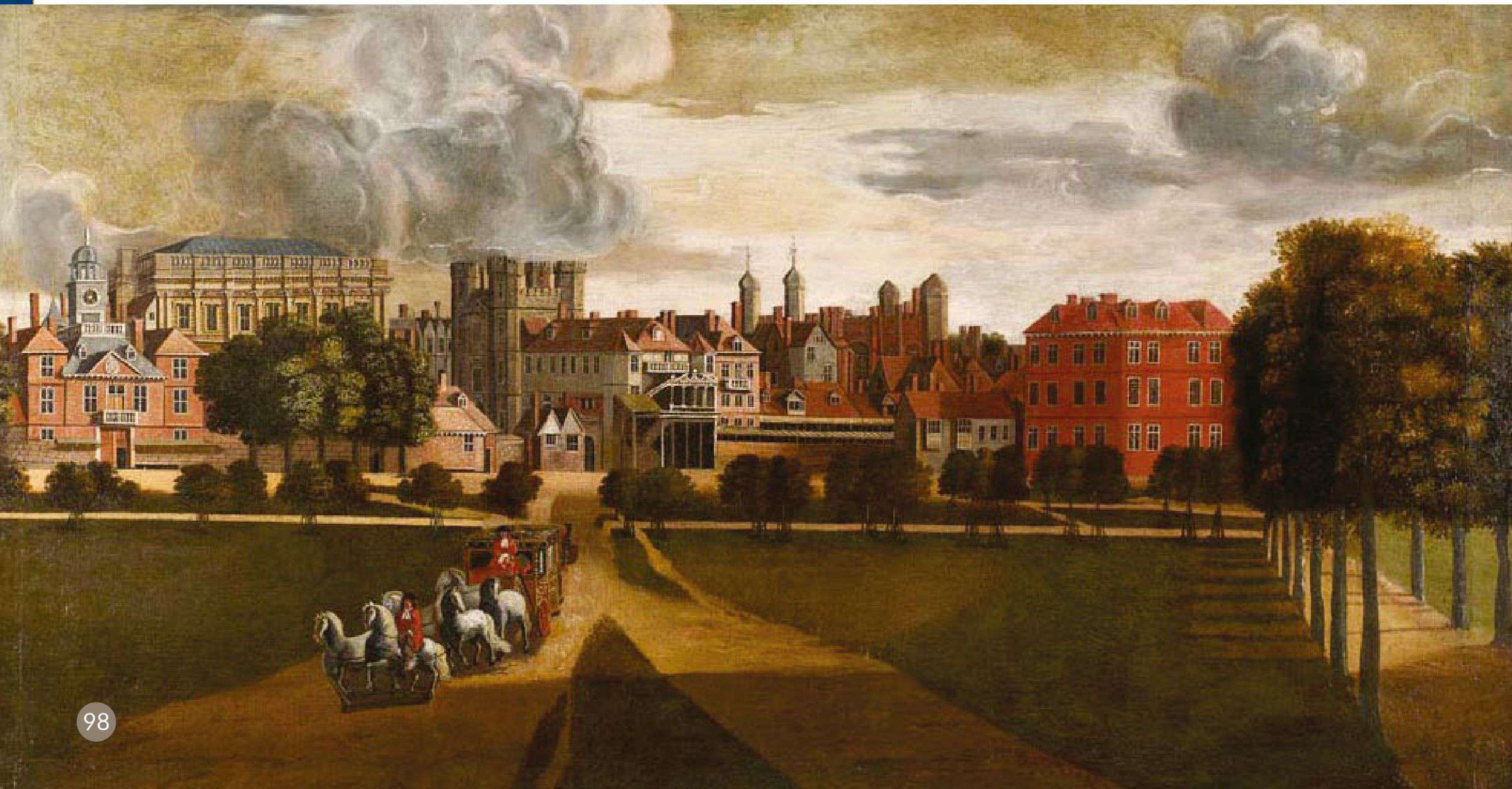
During Jane's time away, Anne had gone from being Henry's beloved wife to a woman he was growing desperately tired of. They had been married for two years, but between the birth of their daughter Elizabeth, and one miscarriage, Anne had failed to provided Henry with the male heir he desired. Her bold and vivacious nature which had attracted him all those years ago, now filled the king with contempt.

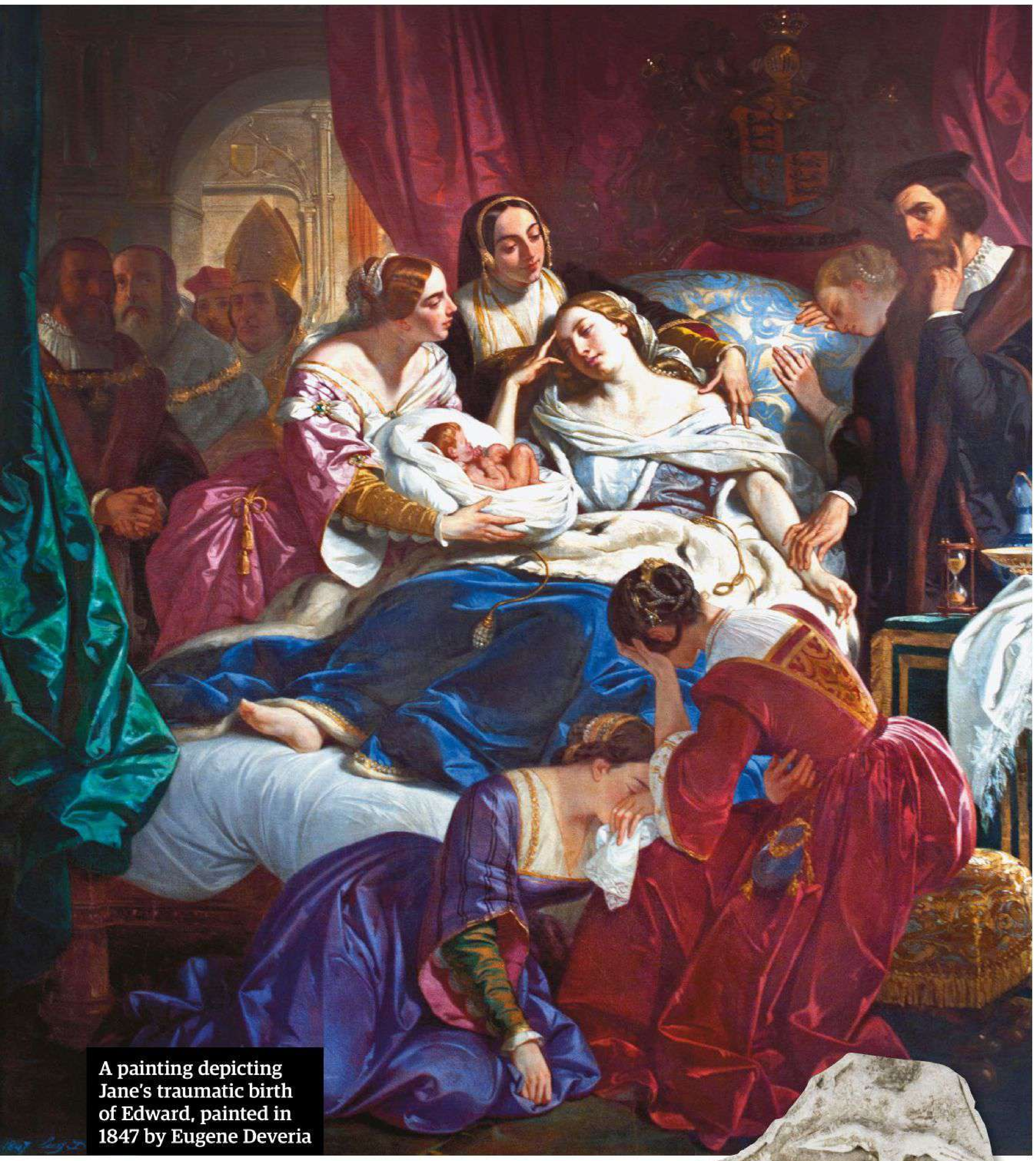
It is no wonder that Henry, a man whose mood seemed in constant flux, caught sight of Jane with his wandering eye while staying at Wolf Hall with the queen during the summer of 1535. With her pale skin, blonde hair and meek demeanour, Jane was the complete opposite to the raven-haired, olive-skinned and passionate Anne. They were so different that it might have surprised Jane to discover that the king had taken a fancy to her.

By November of that year, the French ambassador at the English court had taken note of the king's burgeoning affair with Jane. Henry was enamoured with his new lover and attempted to shower her with gifts. But Jane refused them, including a purse of gold coins, in order to protect her reputation. This virtuous act did nothing to dissuade the king from his suit, and in fact made him even more determined to marry Jane.

As the new year dawned, Henry had begun to openly court his new, mild-mannered mistress, much to the fury of his queen. In a chronicle written by Jane Dormer, the daughter of Jane's former fiancée, she recorded that there was "scratching and bye blows between the queen and her maid" – although it must also be noted that Dormer herself had not been born at this point, laying some doubt to the accuracy of her account.

However, Dormer's account is not the only mention of conflict between Jane and her queen that appeared after the fact. Among the gifts Henry tried to bestow onto his lady love was a





A painting depicting Jane's traumatic birth of Edward, painted in 1847 by Eugene Deveria

locket, which Jane chose to accept. According to Thomas Fuller in his 17th-century work, *History of the Worthies of England*, when Anne saw Jane wearing the necklace she knew what it meant, as Henry had previously given her a similar gift when she was his mistress.

Angered, Anne tore it from Jane's neck with such force that she caused her own hand to bleed. However, she would have hardly noticed her injury once she saw Henry's portrait inside the locket. As Fuller noted, this was supposedly the moment where Anne could see "her own declining and the other's ascending, in her husband's affection".

The queen's tragic fate was sealed when she miscarried a male child in January 1536, which she blamed on catching the king with Jane sitting his lap. Her position had become untenable, particularly as Catherine of Aragon had also passed away that very same month. While Catherine remained alive, there were always those who remained steadfast in their belief that she was the rightful queen, not Anne.

Now Henry had the perfect opportunity in his hands. With Catherine dead, it was now possible

ABOVE A fragment of a heraldic shield excavated at Hampton Court Palace, displaying the arms of Jane Seymour: a gateway, a hawthorn tree and a golden phoenix

LEFT Henry and Jane Seymour were married in the Queen's closet at the Palace of Whitehall

Puppet or player?

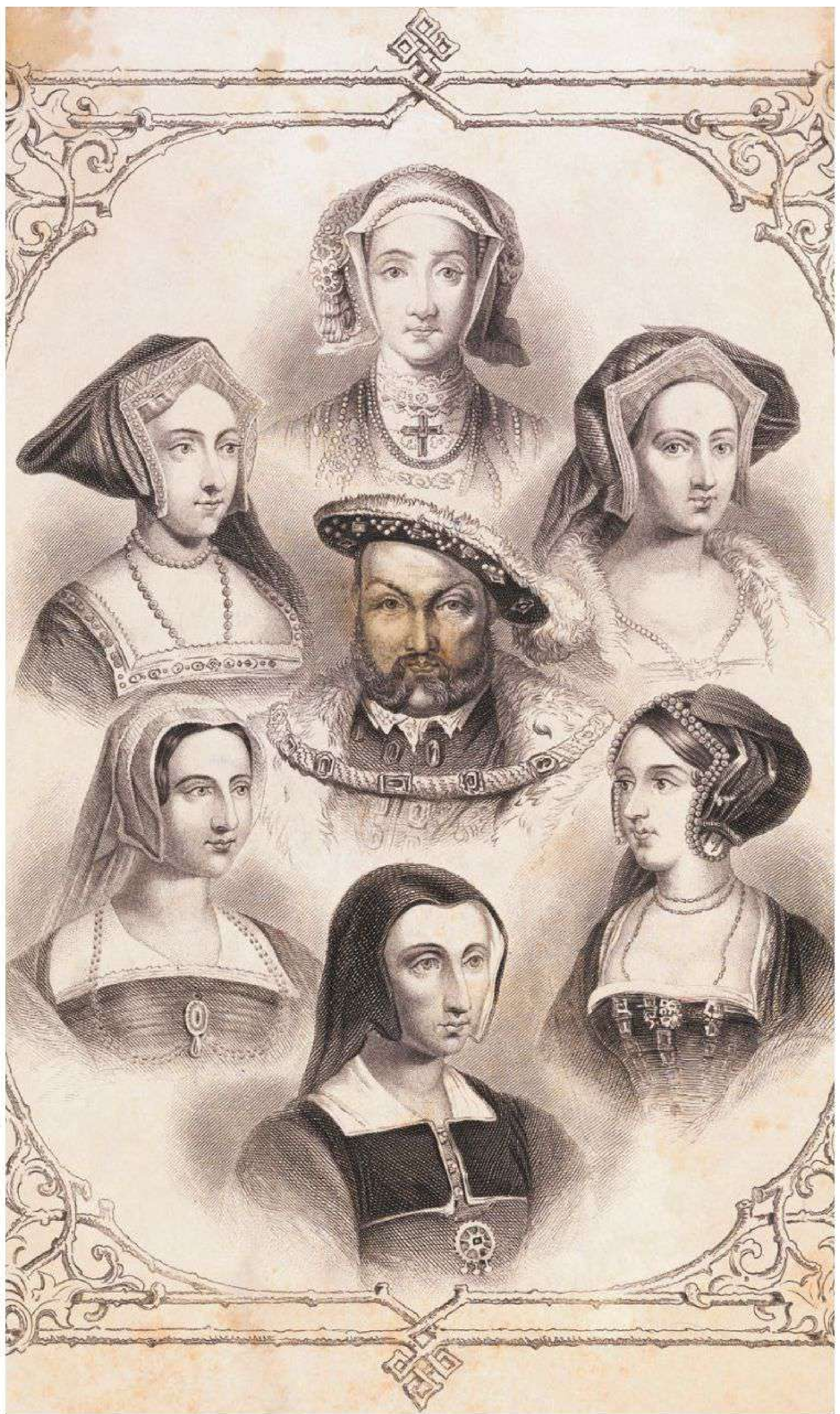
Was Jane a pawn in her family's ambitions, or was she more conniving than she appeared?

History has painted Jane as the antithesis to Anne Boleyn, supposedly forced to seek Henry's affections by her family, to facilitate their own rise at court. It is no wonder, considering the dramatic rise of the Boleyn family, which coincided with Anne's role as mistress. But was Jane really that innocent?

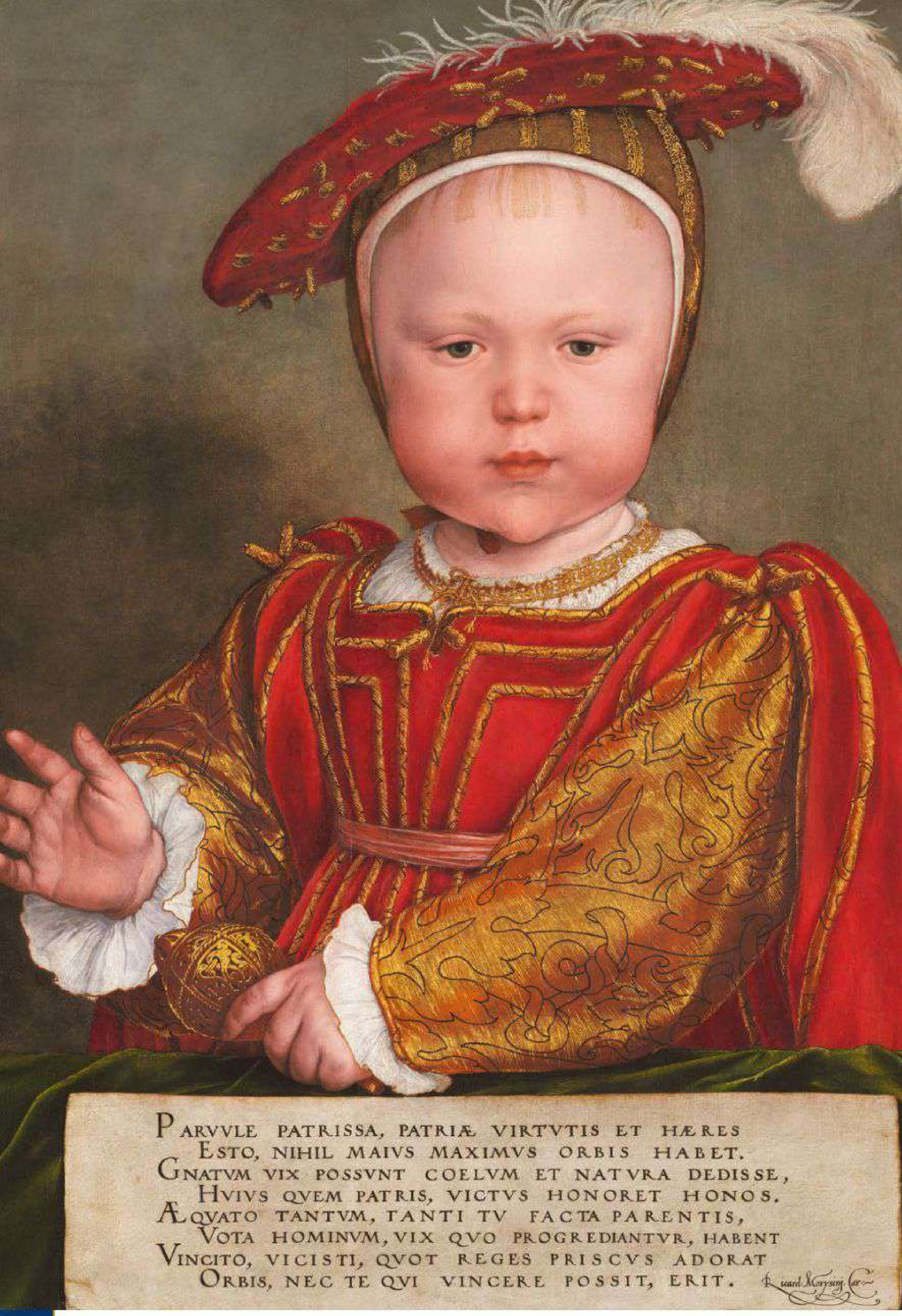
There is no doubt that the Seymour family hoped that Jane would replace Anne and that they would finally receive the status that they craved – ultimately, they would retain Henry's favour for the rest of his reign and that of Edward's. Yet it is also possible that Jane, on the verge of spinsterhood, also wanted a better future for herself and was willing to do whatever it took to get it.

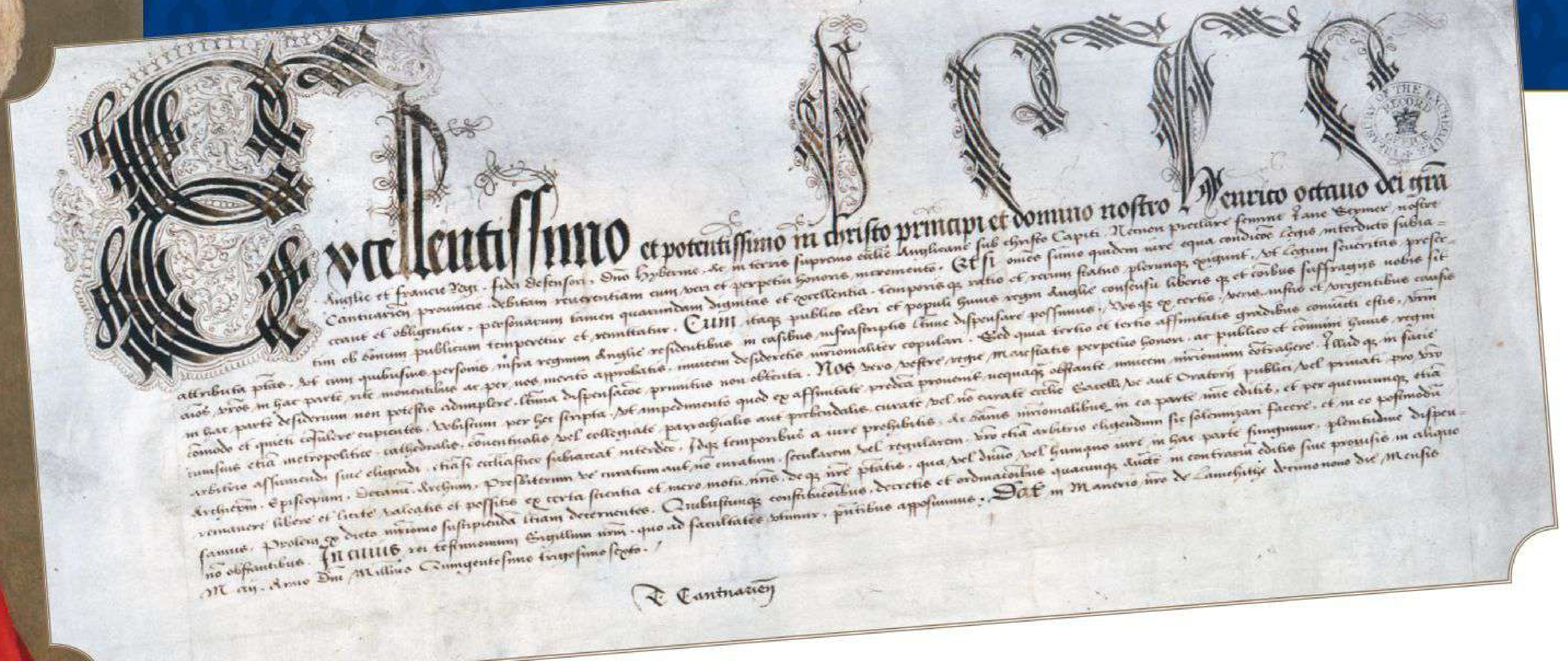
After all, Jane employed the same tactics that Anne Boleyn had once used to entice Henry, refusing to be just his mistress. Where Anne emphasised her sultry youthfulness to show just how different she was to the conservative, older Catherine, Jane ensured that she appeared as different to Anne as night and day.

In the 19th century, Agnes Strickland pointed out that Jane Seymour was aware of how her affair with Henry affected the queen, leading to the latter's miscarriage, but she went and married him anyway. It is a cynical view, but it does suggest that Jane may have been far more manipulative than we have been led to believe.



It is possible that Jane was not the innocent apple of Henry's eye that we remember


PARVULE PATRISSA, PATRIÆ VIRTUTIS ET HÆRES
ESTO, NIHIL MAIUS MAXIMUS ORBIS HABET.
GNATUM VIX POSSUNT COELUM ET NATURA DEDISSE,
HUIUS QUEM PATRIS, VICTUS HONORET HONOS.
ÆQUATO TANTUM, TANTI TU FACTA PARENTIS,
VOTA HOMINUM, VIX QUO PROGREDIANTUR, HABENT
VINCITO, VICISTI, QUOT REGES PRISCUS ADORAT
ORBIS, NEC TE QUI VINCERE POSSIT, ERIT.



ABOVE The dispensation for Henry and Jane's marriage, issued the same day as Anne Boleyn's execution

LEFT Jane's son, Edward VI, helped to secure her place as Henry's favourite wife

for him to have a legitimate son who would be approved by everyone – he just had to rid himself of Anne, the scapegoat for everybody's hatred. In a surviving letter, we know that by this point he was now referring to Jane as his "dear friend and mistress." In the same letter he says: "The bearer of these few lines from thy entirely devoted servant will deliver into thy fairs hands a token of my true affection for thee, hoping you will keep it for ever in your sincere love for me."

In comparison to the sickly love letters he sent to Anne, this letter seems less fervent, and the king even attempted to be more discreet with his new affair, aware of the criticism he received when he was originally courting Anne. However, the king was receiving considerable backlash for his relationship while his queen was on trial – leaving Jane upset and concerned.

Despite this, Henry was determined to be done with Anne once and for all. With trumped-up charges of adultery, incest and conspiracy to the kill the king, Anne's downfall came quickly. On 19 May 1536, Henry had Anne beheaded for high treason. The very next day, he became engaged to Jane.

On 30 May, a mere 11 days after Anne's execution, Henry married Jane, and she was declared queen five days later. To many it was a cold and callous move, but the king was never known for his patience. As Henry's third wife and England's new queen, Jane had a lot of expectation on her shoulders – if she failed, she could end up the same way as her ill-fated predecessor.

Determined to distance herself from the scandal of Anne Boleyn, Jane adopted the motto of 'Bound to Obey and Serve' as queen. The message was obvious: where Anne had been outspoken and fiery, Jane would be fair, quiet and obedient. She quickly brought English fashions, such as the gable hood, back to court to replace the French fashions that Anne introduced. Her household also became far more conservative than Anne's, something Jane made clear when she removed the flamboyant entertainments that Anne had loved.

Although she vowed to serve the king, Jane did attempt to influence him during the Pilgrimage of Grace, which began in October 1536. A deeply religious woman and a Catholic, Jane was troubled by the dissolution of the monasteries and feared the Pilgrimage was God's retribution against the king. She asked the king to pardon those involved

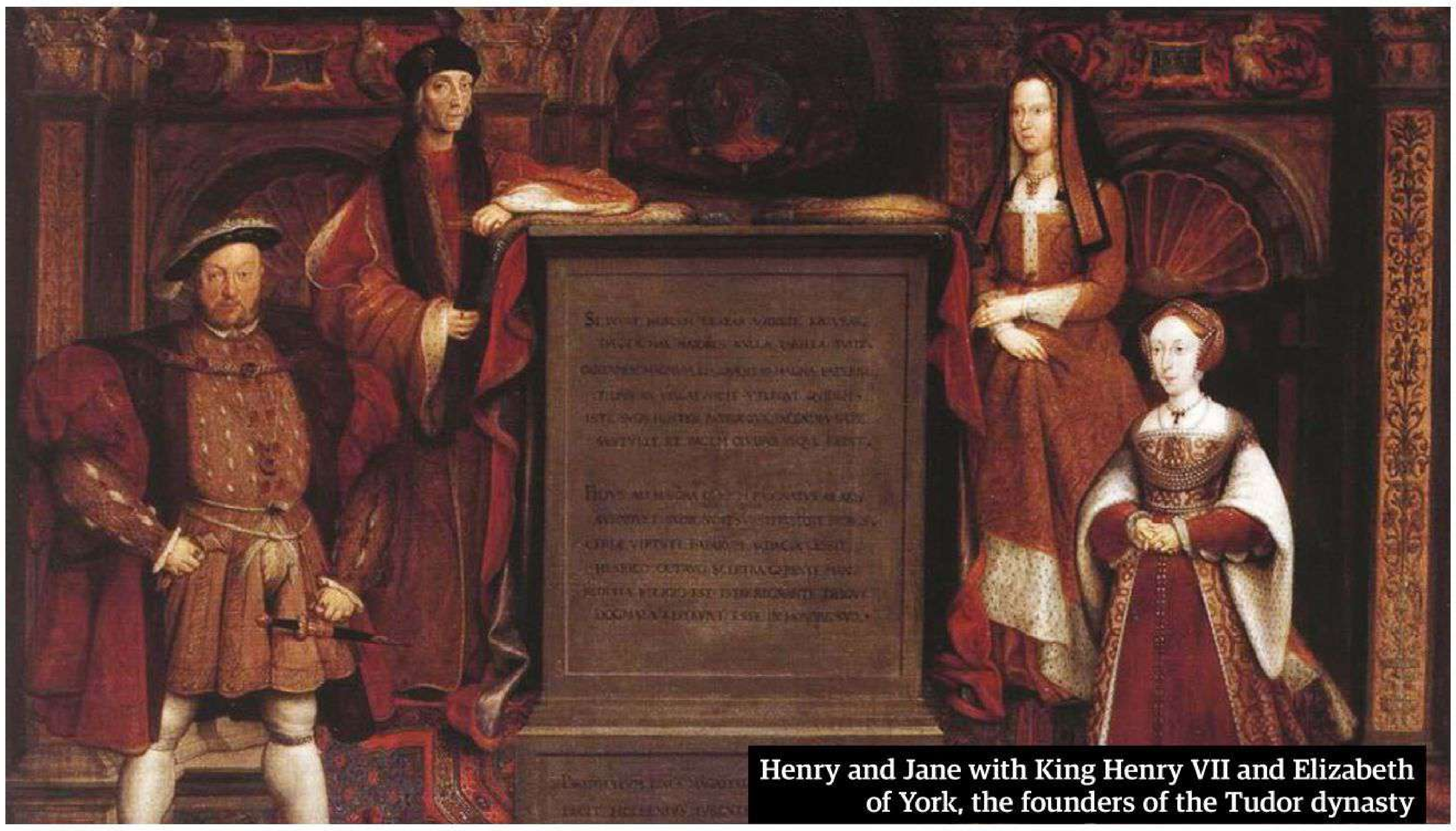
A true Tudor queen

Jane's legacy as the mother of Henry's son lived on even after her death

Wanting to create a mural at the Palace of Whitehall, Henry commissioned Hans Holbein the Younger in 1536 to create a portrait, which featured himself, Jane and his parents, King Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. Completed in 1537, it was likely created with the anticipation that Jane was going to produce the next male in the Tudor dynasty. Unfortunately, the original painting was destroyed in a fire in 1698, but luckily, King Charles II had commissioned copy of it in 1667, which still survives.

Interestingly, this is not the only portrait to symbolise Jane's place in the Tudor dynasty. In 1545, Henry commissioned an unknown artist to create a dynastic portrait of his family. Standing to the far left is Princess Mary, his daughter with Catherine of Aragon, while to the far right stands Princess Elizabeth, Henry's daughter with Anne Boleyn. To Henry's immediate left is Prince Edward and to his right, his beloved queen, Jane Seymour.

It is clear to see Jane's importance from this portrait. By this point, she had been dead for eight years and Henry was married to his sixth and final wife, Catherine Parr. But it was Jane who had given Henry the son he had desired for years and ensured the continuation of the Tudors through the male line – and it was Jane he wanted to have pictured beside him.



Henry and Jane with King Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, the founders of the Tudor dynasty but he publicly rebuked her, reminding her of what had happened to the last queen who defied him.

The experience taught Jane that to survive, she needed to remain meek and mild-mannered. She was also keenly aware how insecure her position as queen was, as she had not been given an official coronation. Henry claimed that he had postponed it because of an outbreak of plague, but it was most likely dependent on the condition that Jane provide him with the son that eluded him. After all, he had given Anne a lavish coronation, but had no male heir to show for it.

> "Jane has the distinction of being the only one of Henry's wives to die as a queen"

To make matters worse, Henry's illegitimate son, Henry FitzRoy, died two months after their wedding. There were rumours Henry wanted to legitimise his son so that he could ascend to the throne. This made FitzRoy a safety net for the queen, giving her more time to conceive. But now he was dead, the race for a male heir was more desperate than ever, as the king was now 45 years old.

A year into their marriage, it was announced that Jane was finally with child, to the delight of the king. Edward Hall, the famed Tudor chronicler, said that after the announcement, "various great fires were made in London, with a hogshead of wine at every fire for the poor people to drink as long as it lasted". He also wrote: "I pray Jesus, if it be his will, to send us a prince" – a sentiment that was probably echoed across the country.

Little is known about Jane's pregnancy, although it is said Jane had a craving for quail, which Henry had imported from Calais especially for his queen. In September 1537, Jane went into confinement at Hampton Court Palace in preparation for the birth. She was praying that soon the son upon whom her future and that of the country's depended would arrive safely.

It is no secret that childbirth in Tudor England was dangerous, but Jane's labour was extremely difficult. It lasted for two days and three nights before she gave birth to her long-awaited son, Edward, on 12 October. She was physically exhausted, but Jane had succeeded where her two predecessors had failed. The Tudor dynasty had been secured, almost three decades into Henry's tumultuous reign.

A letter from Jane to Henry, announcing they were "delivered a prince", resurfaced in 2012. Of course, it was paramount the joyous news spread as quickly as possible. But despite her achievement, Jane was not able to enjoy her new-found security as the mother to the heir of the English throne, as she was unwell from her ordeal.

At first, it looked like the queen would rally. She recovered enough to witness some of the procession heading to her son's christening on 15 October. It proved to be a false hope, as Jane quickly worsened, most likely suffering from childbed fever. She became delirious and demanded sweets and wine, which some contemporaries blamed for her condition. On 24 October, Jane succumbed to her illness.

Jane's funeral was held a few weeks later, on 12 November. 29 ladies took part in Jane's funeral procession, and as it was traditional for each mourner to represent a year of the deceased's life, it is assumed that Jane was only 29 years old when she died.

Her stepdaughter Mary acted as chief mourner at the funeral. After the Pilgrimage incident, Jane did not attempt to involve herself with Henry's affairs, but she was successful in getting the king to reconcile with his daughter. The fact Mary was also named as godmother to Prince Edward is a further testament to this.

Jane has the distinction of being the only one of Henry's wives to die as a queen, and therefore receive a royal funeral at Windsor. The king was left devastated by Jane's death and he grieved for three months, wearing only black clothing. After her death he began to pile on a significant amount of weight, something he had struggled with since his jousting accident the previous year.

Henry was buried next to Jane following his own death in 1547, per his request. For this reason, it is commonly assumed that Jane was Henry's favourite wife, as she had given him the male heir he had always wanted. Also, the gap of three years between Jane's death and Henry's remarriage to Anne of Cleves was the longest break he had between wives, another hint as to how heartbroken he was by her death. Jane's reign as queen may have been tragically brief, but her importance in history as the woman who finally gave Henry VIII the male heir he needed has ensured her legacy will never be forgotten.

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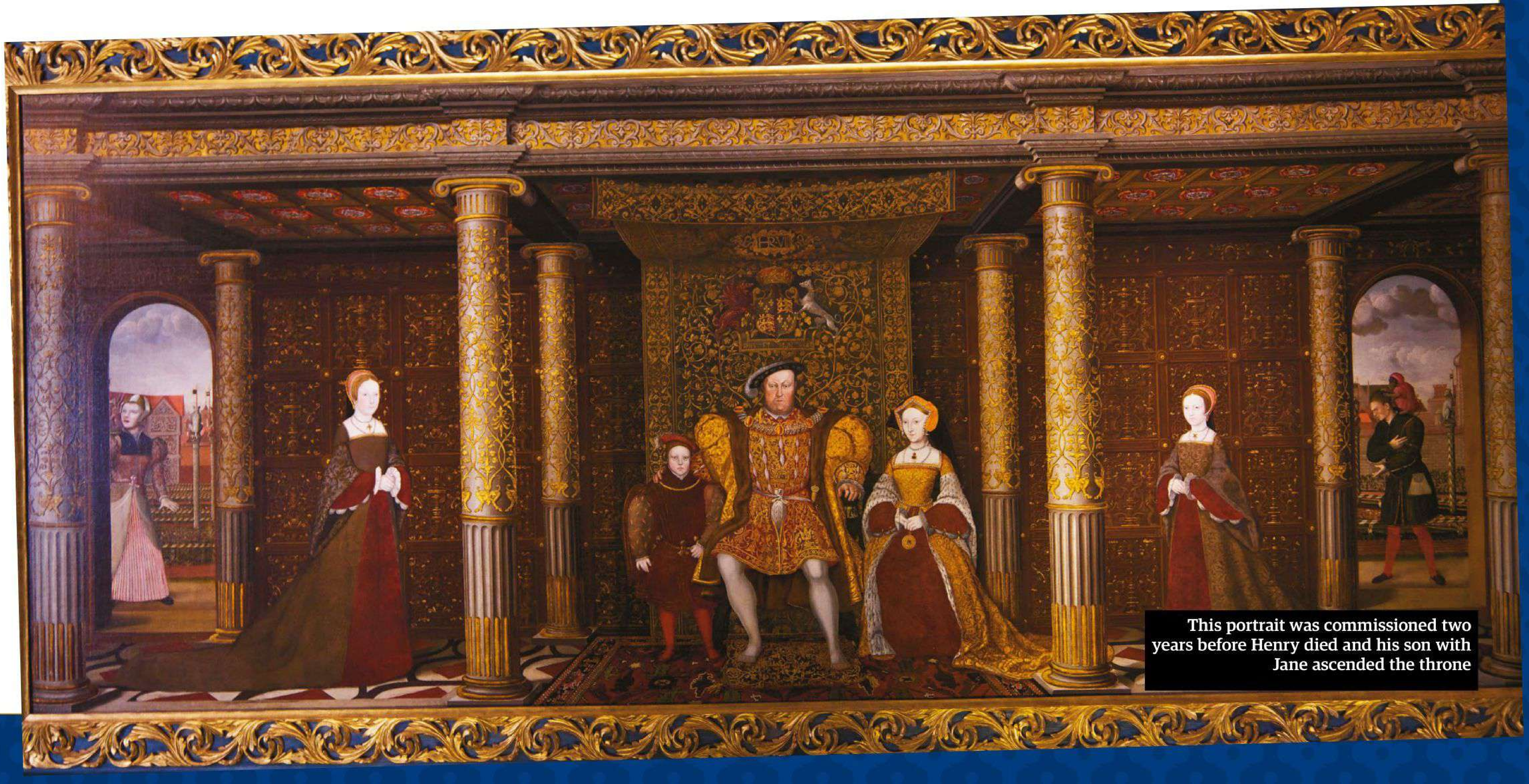

This portrait was commissioned two years before Henry died and his son with Jane ascended the throne

The dying days of King Henry

In his failing years, the king became erratic and brutal

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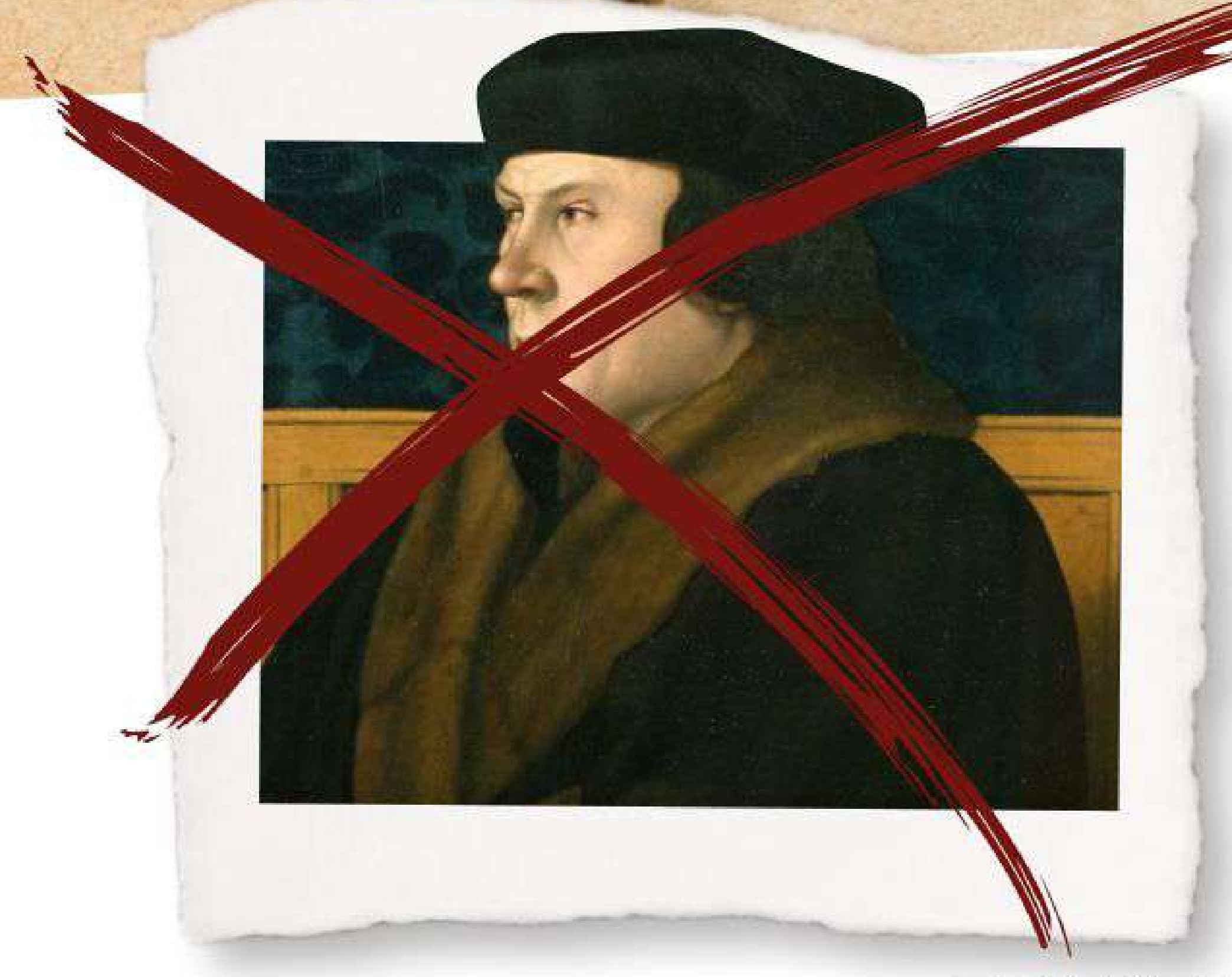
Henry VIII's HIT LIST

1536-1547

In the dusk of Henry's life, few of the king's most trusted advisers survived his erratic, unpredictable tempers

Words ALICEA FRANCIS



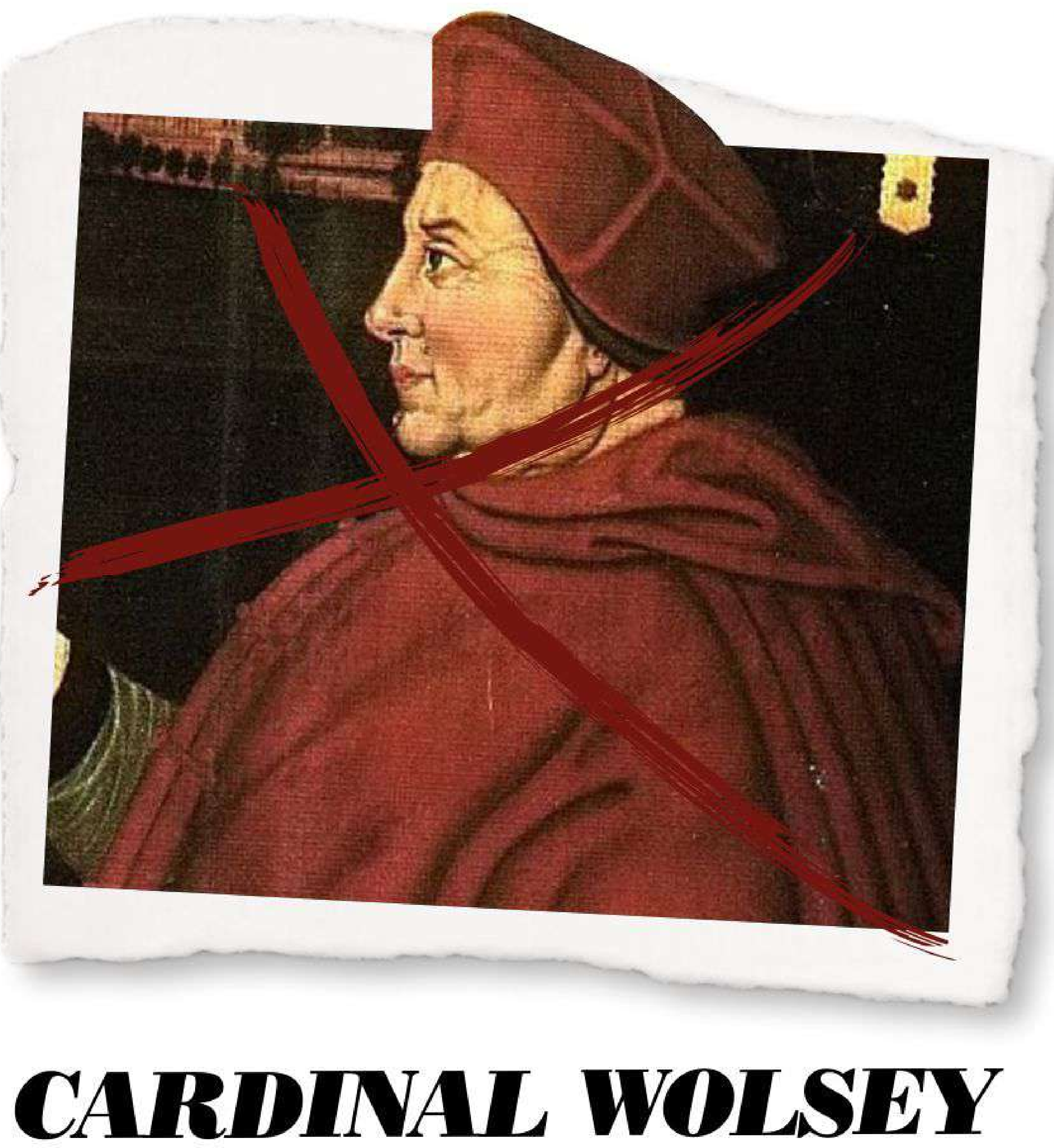
THOMAS CROMWELL

The fib that proved fatal

b.1485-d.1540

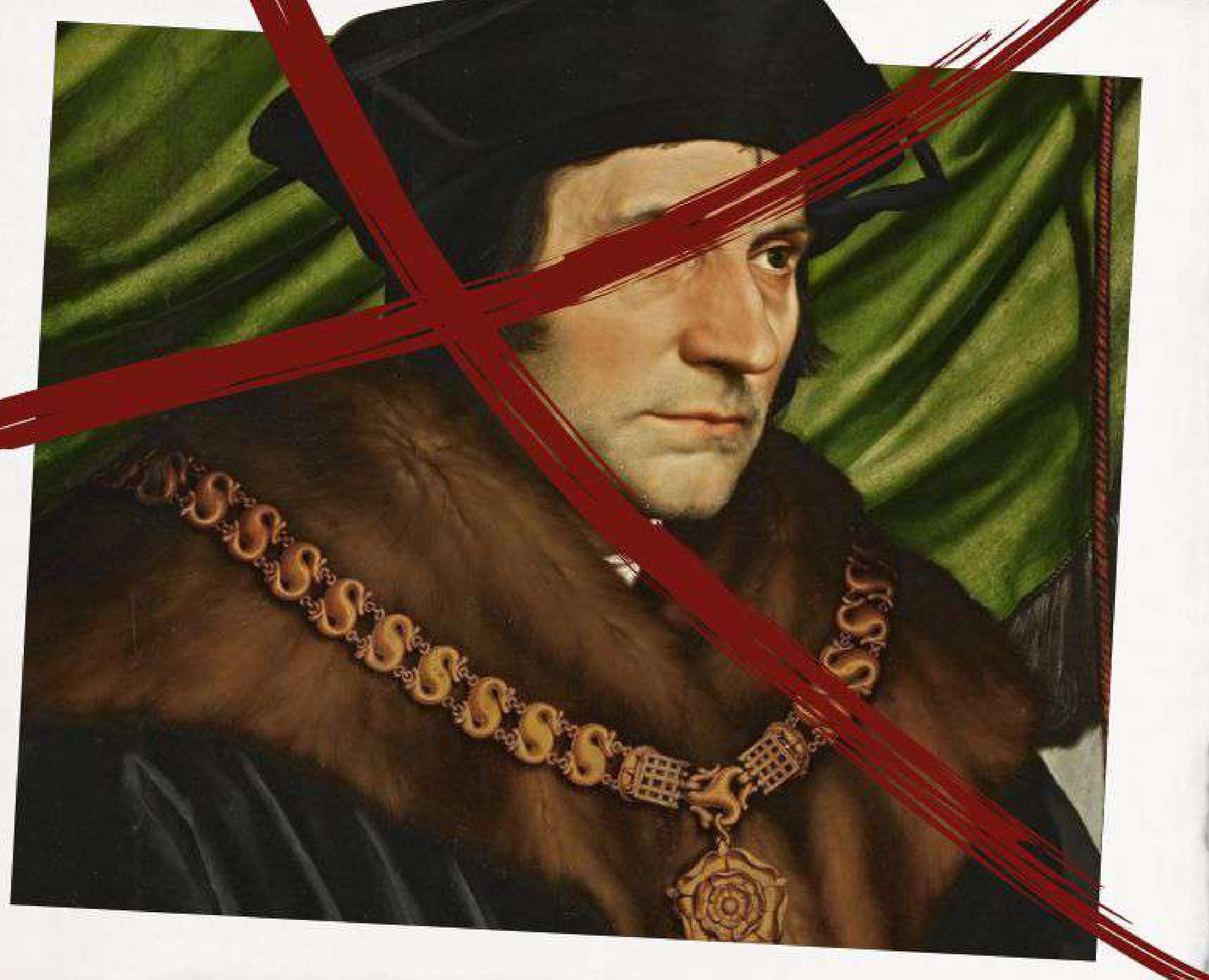
Friend or Foe? Foe

Three years into his marriage to Anne, Henry still had no male heir. Once again, his fidelity wavered and in 1536 he fell for Jane Seymour. Meanwhile, Anne and Cromwell clashed over the redeployment of monastic funds and Anne instructed her chaplains to publicly preach against him. In May that year, she was executed for adultery, incest and high treason, and the king married Jane. Henry was overjoyed when Jane had a son but she died less than two weeks later. Cromwell began to make arrangements for a marriage to Anne of Cleves, a foreign princess, and it's believed he exaggerated her beauty. When the pair finally met on New Year's Day 1540, Henry was repulsed. The marriage was never consummated and once an annulment was granted, Cromwell was condemned to death without trial.



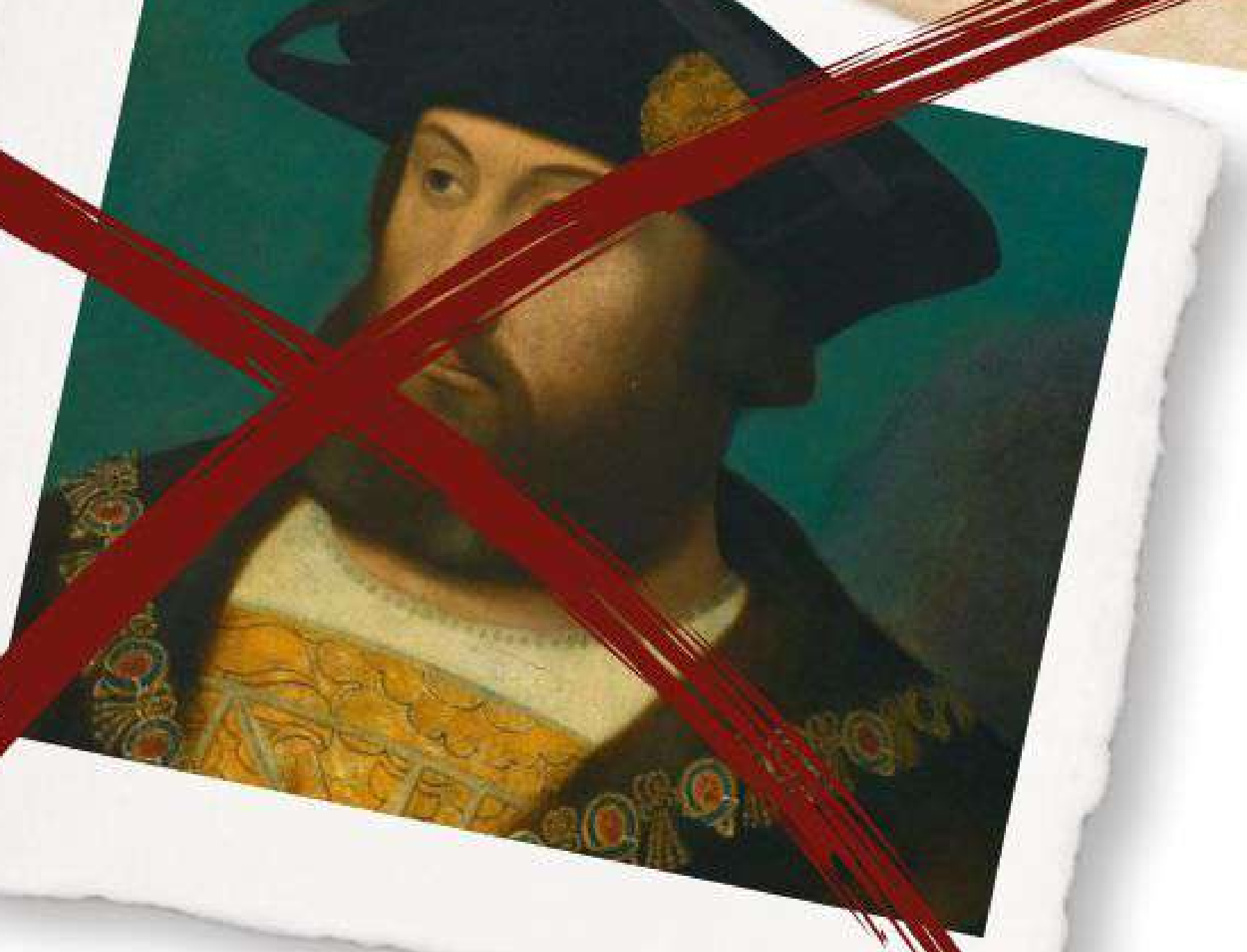
CARDINAL WOLSEY

Deceased



THOMAS MORE

Deceased



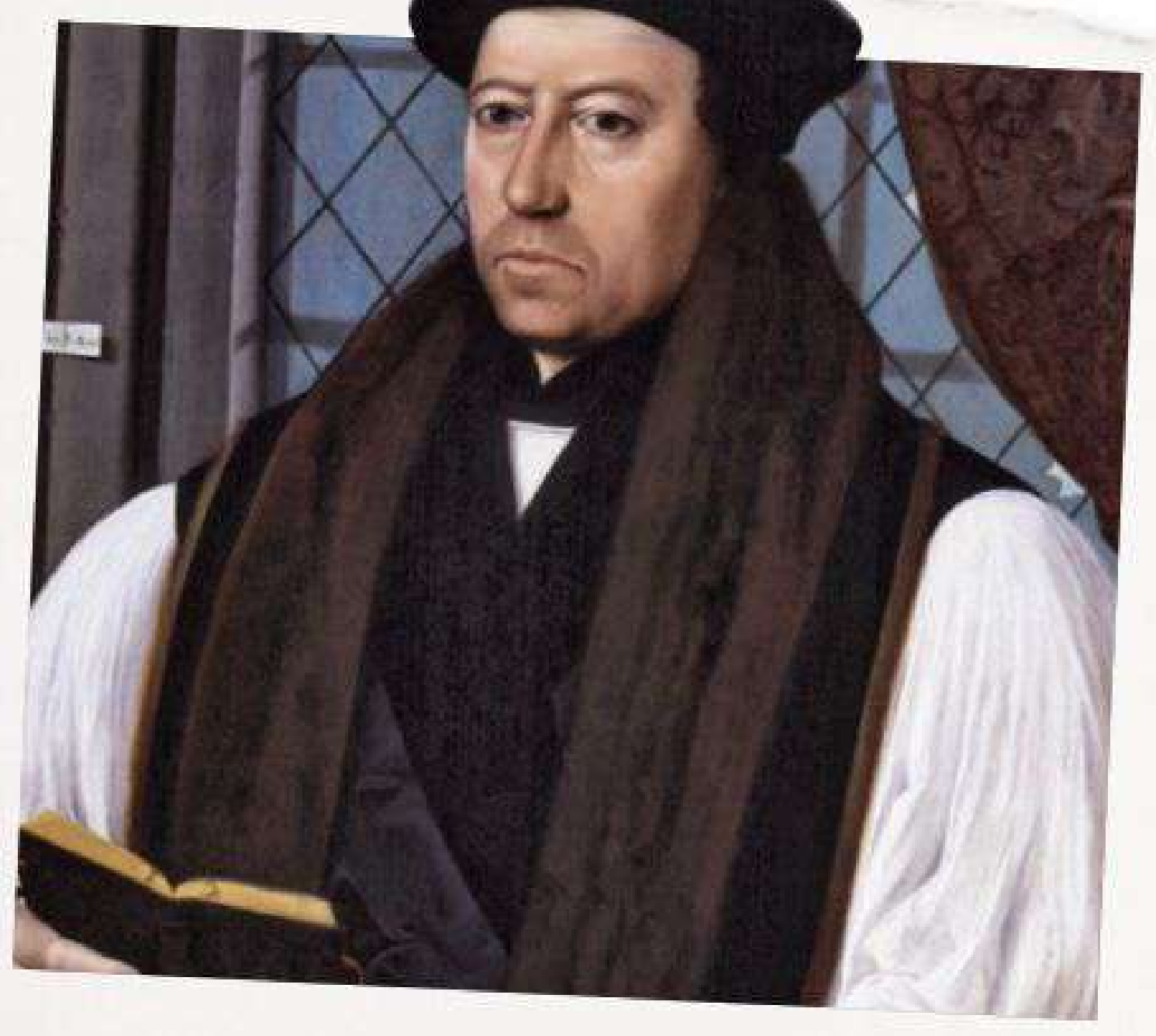
CHARLES BRANDON

A friend for life

b.1485-d.1545

Friend or Foe? Friend

Following Anne's arrest in May 1536, Brandon was chosen to sit on the jury at her trial. Needless to say, he returned a guilty verdict. It's thought that the charge of incest was actually brought forward by Brandon, as he was accused of incest by Anne some years previously. On her execution day he was in the crowd, watching intently. His friendship with Henry was fully restored and he benefitted greatly from the dissolution of the monasteries. He also successfully led an army against rebels of the Pilgrimage of Grace, which was protesting the break with Rome. In 1542, he was one of the men who arrested Henry's fifth wife and he served as the king's lieutenant in the north. However, on 22 August 1545, he died suddenly. Henry VIII organised and paid for a lavish ceremony at Saint George's Chapel, Windsor.



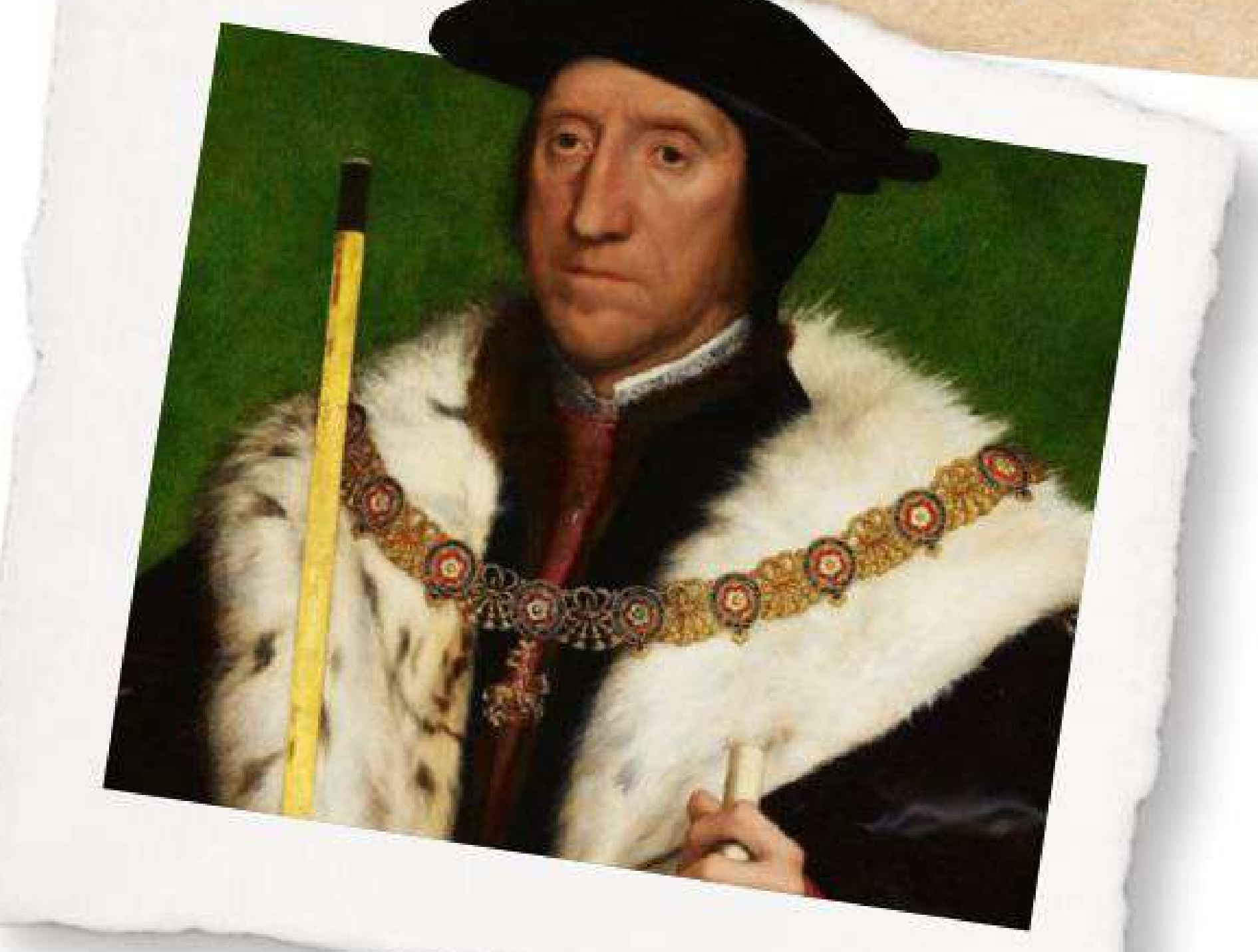
THOMAS CRANMER

By Henry's side until the end

b.1489-d.1556

Friend or Foe? Friend

Cranmer had no qualms informing the king of his doubts regarding Anne's guilt and was one of the few who publicly mourned her death. The closest he came to falling from favour was in 1539, following the passing of the Act of the Six Articles, which outlawed marriage among the clergy. Despite once again voicing concerns about Henry's rash decision-making in 1540, the archbishop proved his loyalty when he annulled his marriage to Anne of Cleves. It was he who later informed the king of Catherine Howard's alleged affair, presumably as part of a plan to topple Thomas Howard. Despite a 1543 conspiracy against him by conservative clergymen, when a list of his alleged misdeeds were exposed to the king, Cranmer avoided prosecution. When Henry passed away, Cranmer was by his side.



THOMAS HOWARD

The duke gets his comeuppance

b.1473-d.1554

Friend or Foe? Foe

Norfolk went to extraordinary lengths to retain power. At Anne's trial he was lord high steward and condemned her to death. On the day of Cromwell's execution following the king's annulment from Anne of Cleves, Henry married Norfolk's other niece, Catherine Howard, and his power was restored. However, when Catherine was charged with adultery in 1541, the king turned on the Howards and many of them were sent to the Tower. Norfolk only narrowly avoided execution and Edward Seymour replaced him as Henry's right-hand man. His power was slipping away. He lost his grip on it completely when his son was charged with high treason for incorporating the arms of Edward the Confessor into his personal heraldry. Norfolk was sentenced to death without trial, only saved by the king's own death the following day.

Anne of Cleves The least Loved bride

Henry VIII's fourth marriage proved to be his shortest, with the king taking an immediate dislike to his German-born bride, Anne of Cleves

Words ELIZABETH NORTON

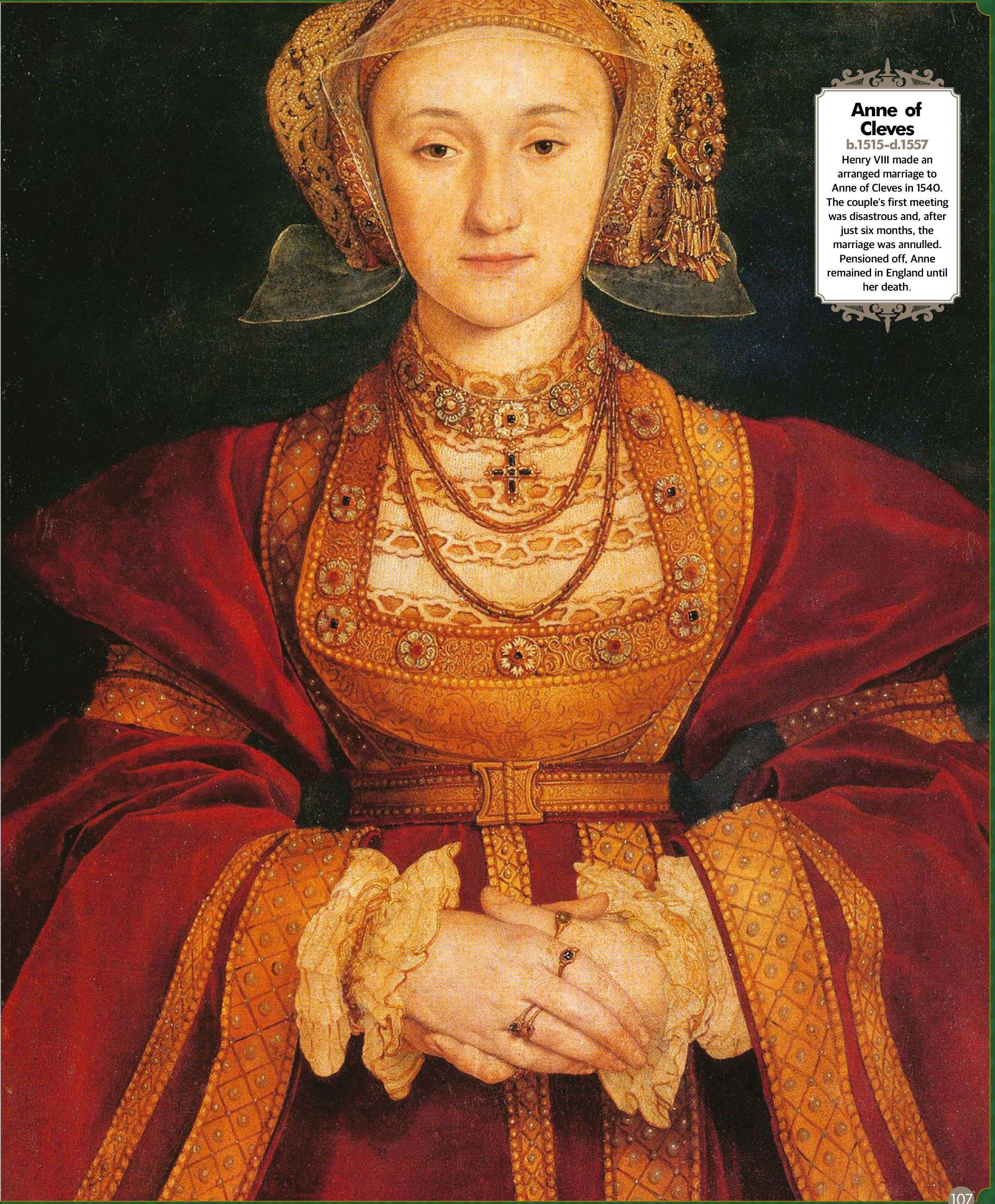
Few English queens enjoyed a shorter tenure in the role than Anne of Cleves, a woman who was unlucky enough to find herself as Henry VIII's fourth wife. The death of his third wife, Jane Seymour, in childbirth in October 1537 created a vacancy that Henry VIII wanted quickly filled. He was, at first, interested in a French bride, before seeking a wife among the family of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Yet, when the emperor and the French king made peace in 1539, England was left dangerously exposed. Henry's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, suggested that the king look further afield.

In the 16th century, Germany was made up of a series of semi-independent principalities and duchies, under the nominal control of the Holy Roman Emperor. While the Emperor, Charles V, was a committed Catholic, by the 1530s many of the German princes had come under the influence of Martin Luther and other early Protestant reformers. To protect their position, a Protestant defensive league – known as the Schmalkaldic League – was created in February 1531, led by Philip, Landgrave of Hesse and John Frederick, Duke of Saxony. The Duchy of Cleves remained Catholic and was not a member of the League, but John Frederick was married to the eldest sister of the Duke of Cleves. His wife had two younger sisters: Anne and Amelia. By January 1539, they were the best matches that the League could offer.

Anne of Cleves was 23 years old, and had been strictly raised by her conservative mother. She was a very suitable match for Henry, being closely related to both the King of France and the Holy Roman Emperor. Personally, however, the English ambassadors had concerns. She knew no other language than German and had no knowledge of music or dancing – qualities Henry esteemed in a woman. Nonetheless, as the ambassadors noted, "Her wit is so good, that no doubt she will in a short space learn the English tongue."

Henry sent his court painter, Hans Holbein, to paint both sisters and was pleased with Anne's. All reports made of her beauty were positive, although the English ambassadors lamented it was difficult to get a clear view of the sisters due to the "monstrous habits" they wore.

By the end of September 1539, a marriage treaty had been agreed and the princess set out for England, arriving at English-held Calais on 11 December. While waiting for the weather to clear to allow her to sail, Anne impressed those she met with her amiability. On one occasion, she asked her attendants to teach her a card game that Henry liked so they could have an interest in common. She also dined with the Englishmen sent to greet



Anne of Cleves

b.1515-d.1557

Henry VIII made an arranged marriage to Anne of Cleves in 1540. The couple's first meeting was disastrous and, after just six months, the marriage was annulled. Pensioned off, Anne remained in England until her death.

> "While Anne was, at first, oblivious to Henry's dislike of her, Cromwell was all too aware"

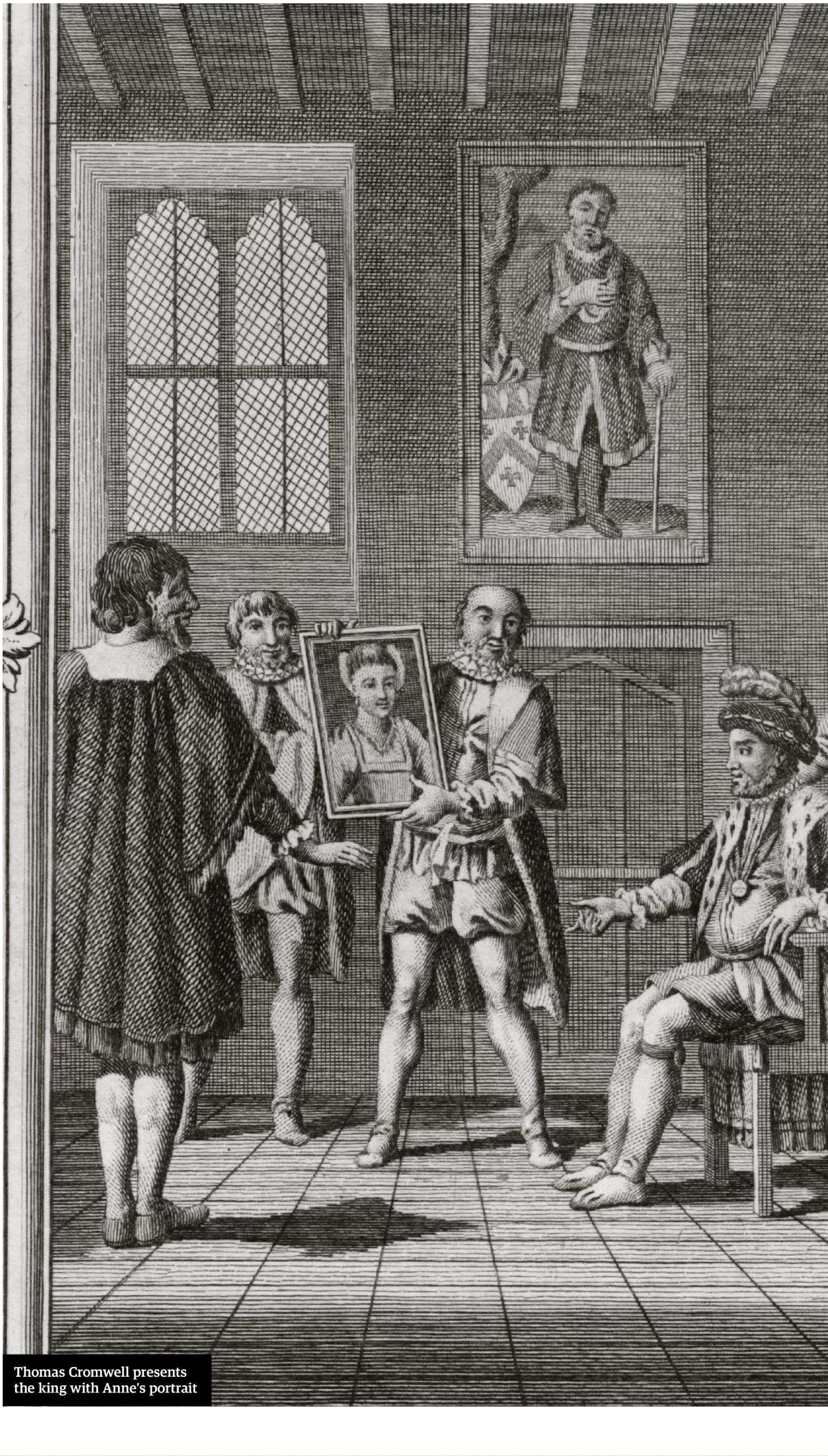
her in Calais in order to learn more about English customs. She was, however, already homesick, eagerly opening letters that arrived for news of her former home.

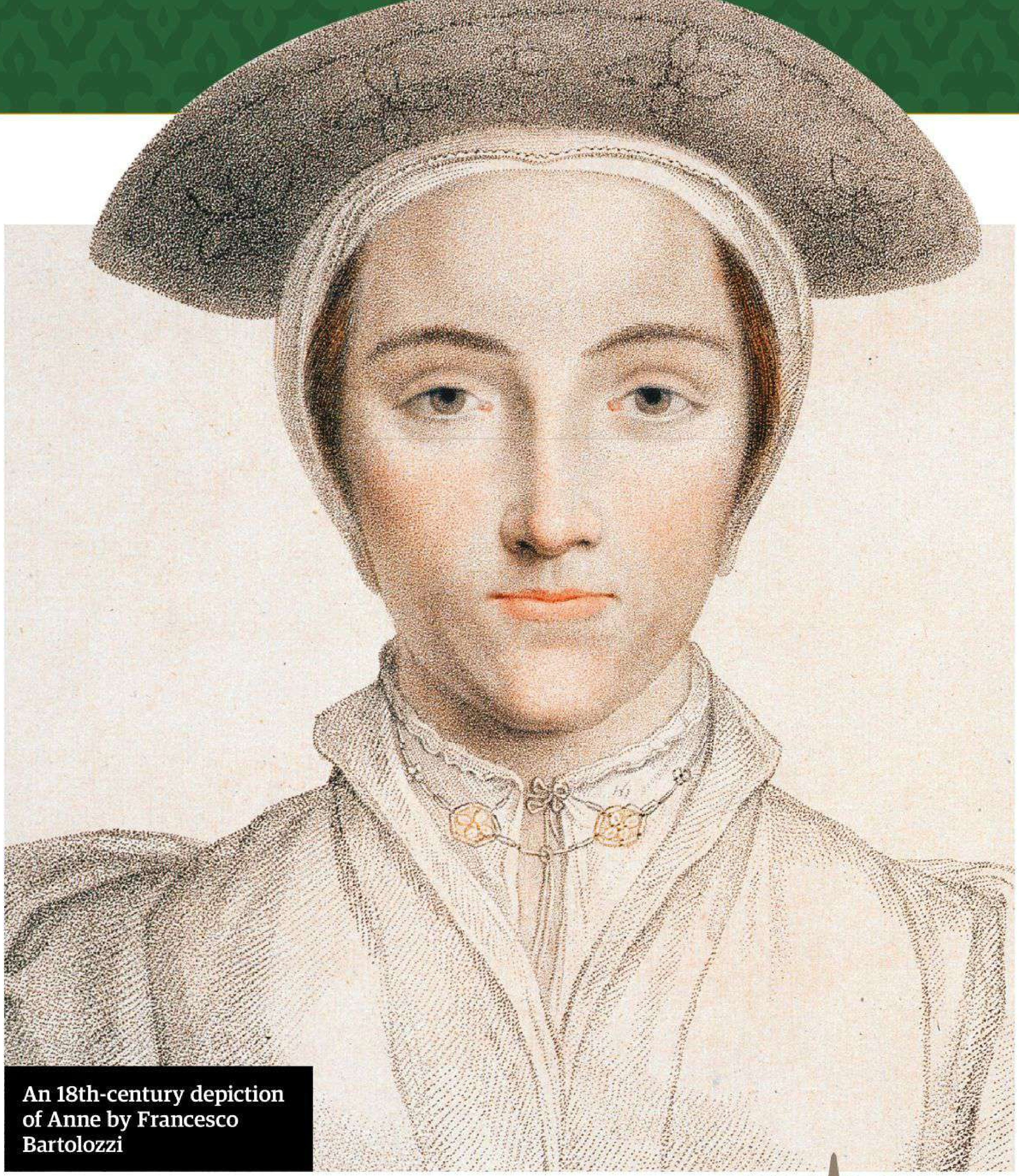
After being forced to spend a quiet Christmas at Calais, Anne was finally able to sail on 27 December, arriving at Deal in Kent that day. There she was met by Henry's brother-in-law, the Duke of Suffolk. After a day of rest at Dover Castle on 28 December, Anne once again showed her agreeable nature, consenting to travel on towards London on 29 December, in spite of the fact that 'the day was foul and windy with much hail'. She arrived at Rochester on New Year's Eve.

Henry VIII had known all three of his previous wives before marriage. Although he had not met Anne, with the help of her portrait and the favourable reports of her appearance and demeanour, he already appeared in love with her to those who saw him at court. After the long delay at Calais, he was anxious to meet her and, on New Year's Day, he could contain himself no more. Disguising himself as a messenger, Henry set out with only a few companions for Rochester, in order to "nourish love" (as he confessed) with his bride.

The idea of a king visiting his new bride in secret was firmly rooted in ideals of courtly love, with the woman expected to recognise her suitor thanks to the love that already existed between them. Anne, however, had no background in courtly love and had already encountered an overwhelming number of new faces since she had left Cleves. She was standing at a window in her chamber, watching a bull baiting in the courtyard below, when the 'messenger' was ushered into her presence.

Perhaps annoyed at the intrusion, Anne ignored her middle-aged and overweight visitor, continuing to look out the window. Even when he attempted to kiss her, she continued to look away, forcing the king to finally admit defeat and leave the room. He re-entered, dressed in a cloak of purple velvet, which was the signal for everyone assembled to recognise him. As those around her fell to their knees, Anne realised her catastrophic mistake and curtseyed to the king, who greeted her before taking her into another chamber where they talked through interpreters.


Thomas Cromwell presents the king with Anne's portrait



An 18th-century depiction of Anne by Francesco Bartolozzi

Henry was courteous to his new bride, but the damage had already been well and truly done. He hurried away from Rochester the next day, forgetting to give Anne her New Year's gift of rich furs. Although he probably never did complain that he had been sent a "Flander's Mare" instead of a woman, his expression on first meeting Anne said much. In the boat back to Greenwich, Henry complained to his friend, Sir Anthony Browne, that, "I see nothing in this woman as men report of her; and I marvel that wise men would make such report as they had done."

No one ever complained that Holbein's likeness of Anne was a bad one, although the French ambassador did comment she looked older than expected and dressed badly. It may be that Anne's dismissive reaction to Henry when he first arrived was enough to shatter his illusions of love. When Cromwell asked how the meeting had gone, Henry replied she was "nothing so well as she was spoken of" and that he wished she had not come to England. For fear of angering Anne's brother and driving him into an alliance with the Emperor, however, Henry was forced to proceed with Anne's official welcome to Greenwich on 3 January 1540.

A warren of honourable ladies

Anne of Cleves was not Henry VIII's first choice of bride

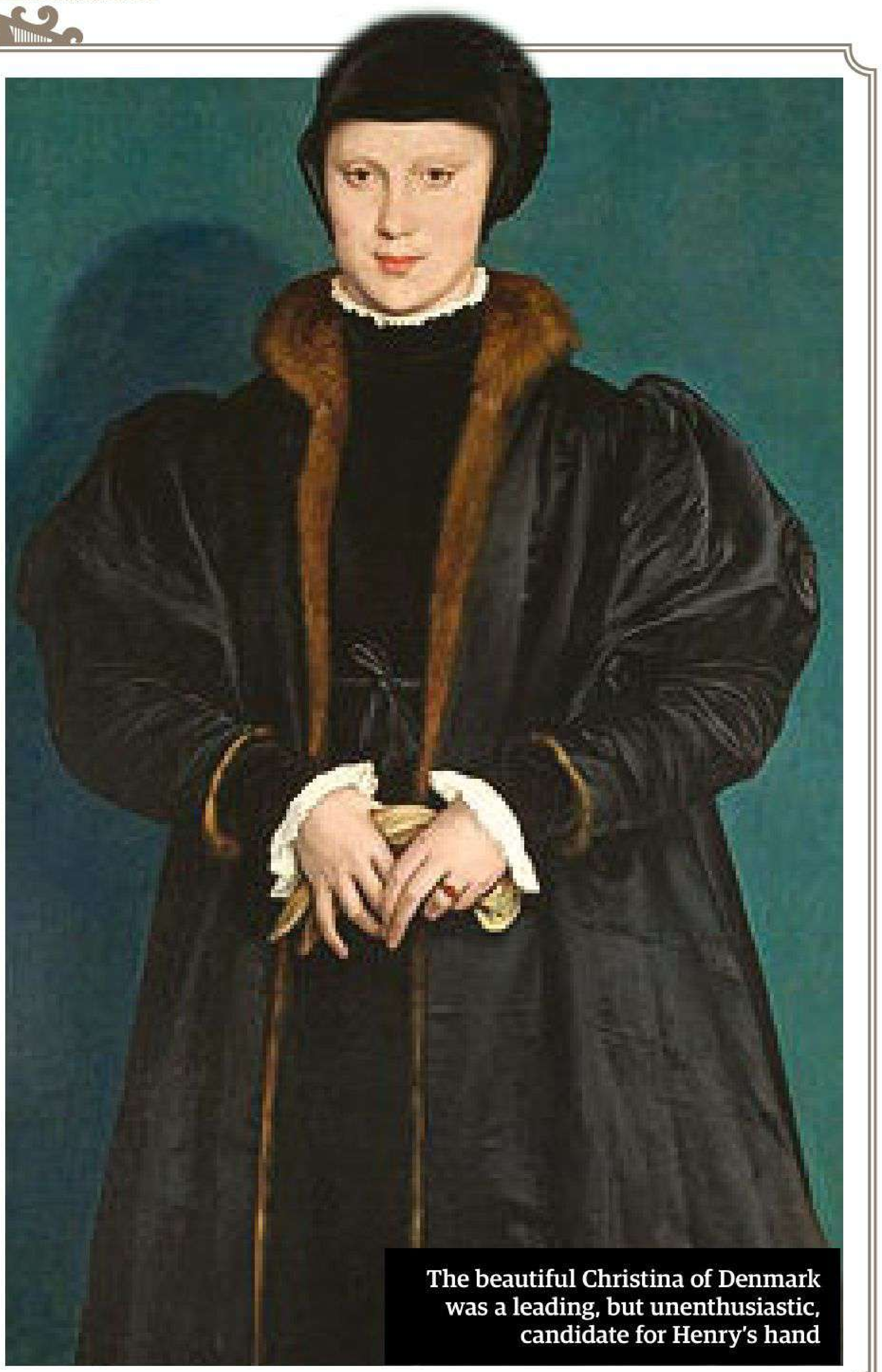
Jane Seymour's death left Henry VIII without an obvious candidate for a fourth wife. Thankfully, he had a wealth of foreign candidates to choose from, with the French king, Francis I, assuring him that his realm was a "warren of honourable ladies".

Henry's first choice was the statuesque French noblewoman Marie de Guise. Unfortunately, she was already betrothed to Henry's nephew, James V of Scotland. This did not prevent the uncle from making an attempt at her hand, with the English king declaring that, "he was big in person and had need of a big wife." When her engagement proved unbreakable, he considered her two younger sisters, ignoring the fact that one was promised to a convent.

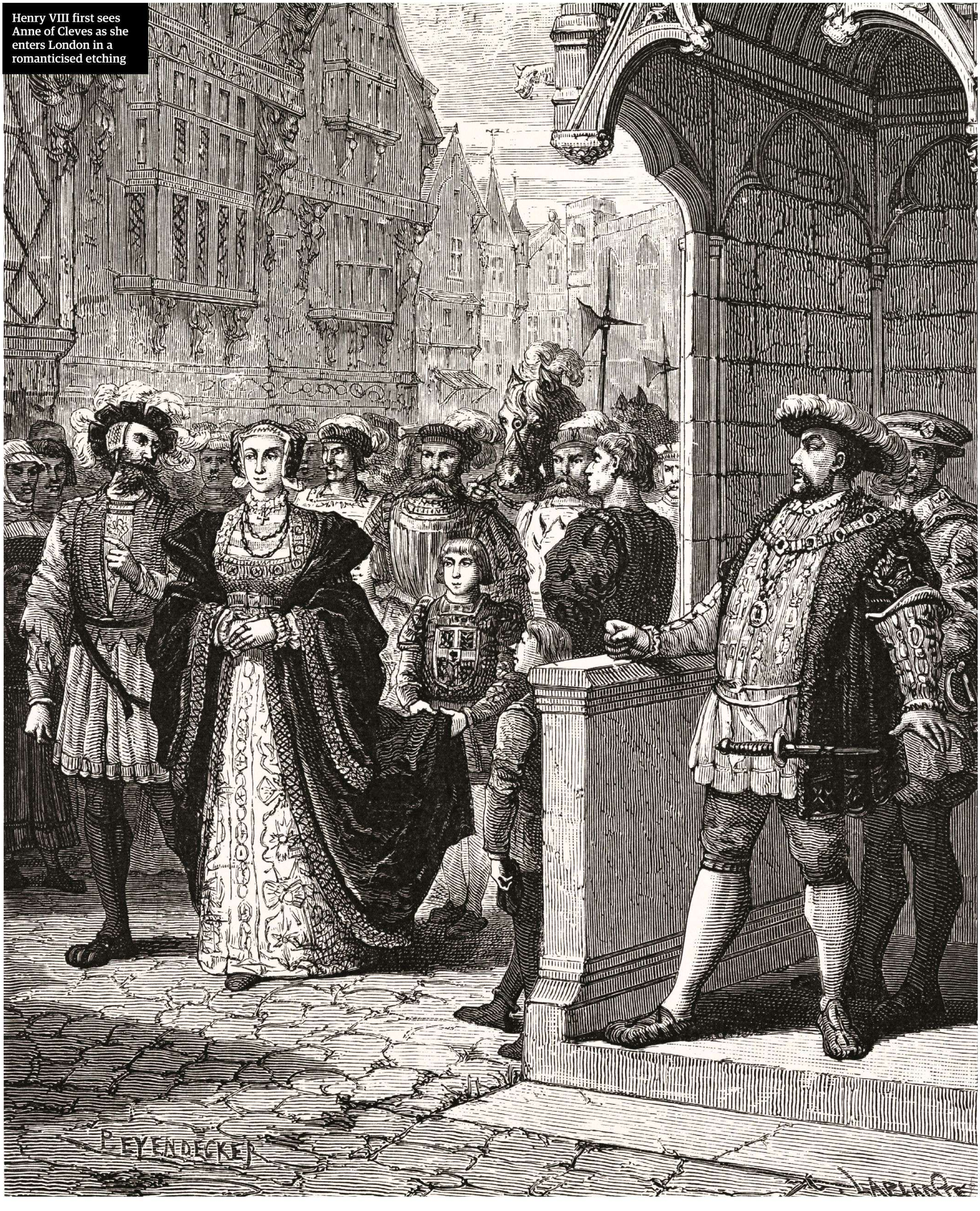
Henry had known all three of his previous wives before he committed to matrimony. In July 1538, he requested that three French candidates be brought to Calais to allow him to make his choice personally. While, to modern eyes, this appears a reasonable request, to the French, it was scandalous, with Francis complaining that the women were not horses to be made to promenade on show. When Henry persisted, the French ambassador sarcastically asked whether he also wanted to try out the ladies before he chose, causing the king to blush.

By early 1538, Henry had opened negotiations to take a bride from the Holy Roman Empire. Christina of Denmark was Charles V's niece and was living at the court of his sister, Mary of Hungary. Although still a teenager, Christina was already a widow, having been married in childhood. She was reportedly beautiful, although lukewarm in her enthusiasm for the match. Tradition has it that, on hearing of the king's interest, she replied that, "she had but one head, if she had two, one should be at his Majesty's service."

As the great-niece of Henry VIII's discarded first wife, Catherine of Aragon, Christina of Denmark knew about his fearsome reputation as a husband. She cannot have been displeased, therefore, when negotiations were finally broken off early in 1539 when peace was made between the empire and France.

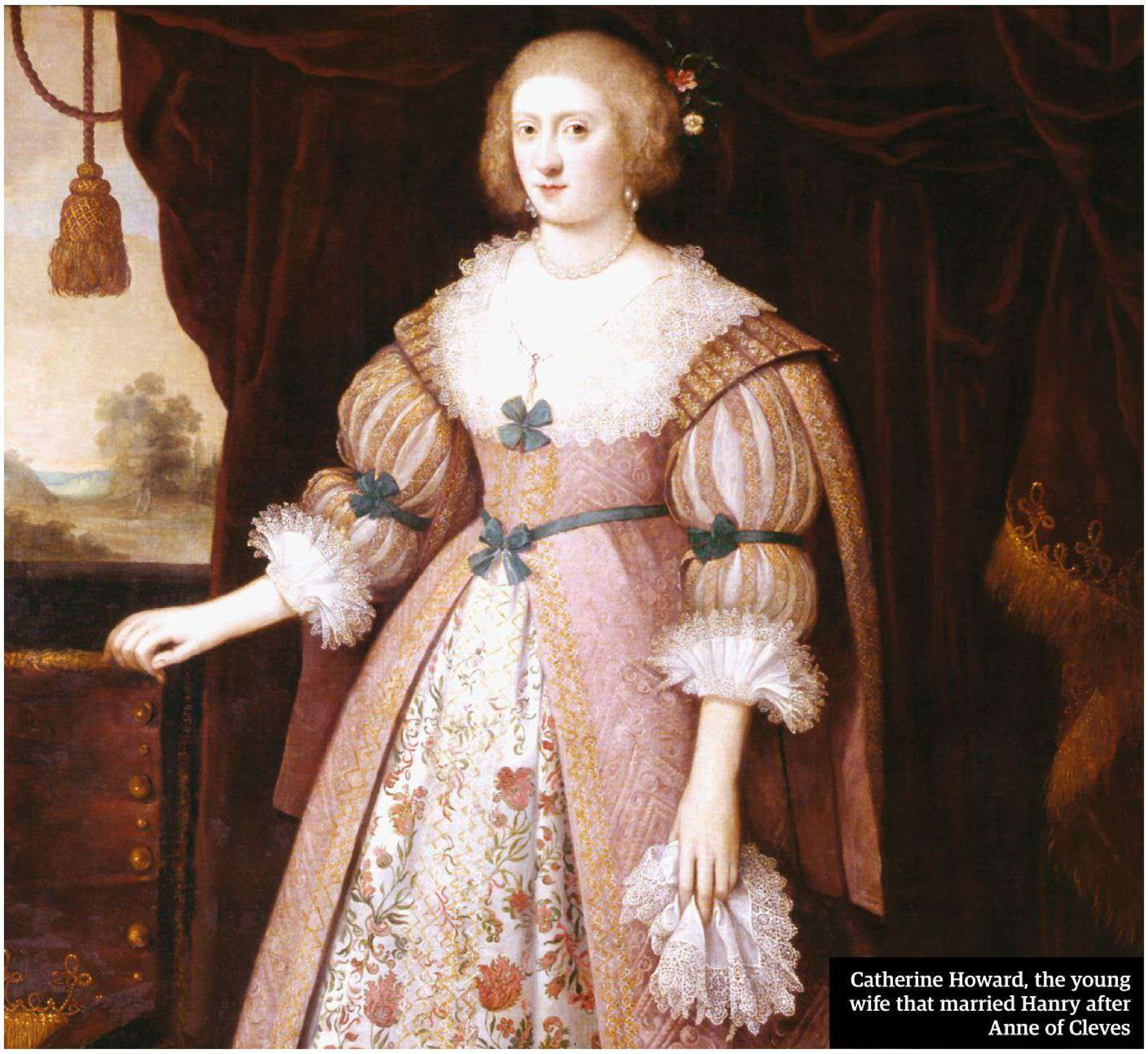


The beautiful Christina of Denmark was a leading, but unenthusiastic, candidate for Henry's hand



Henry VIII first sees Anne of Cleves as she enters London in a romanticised etching

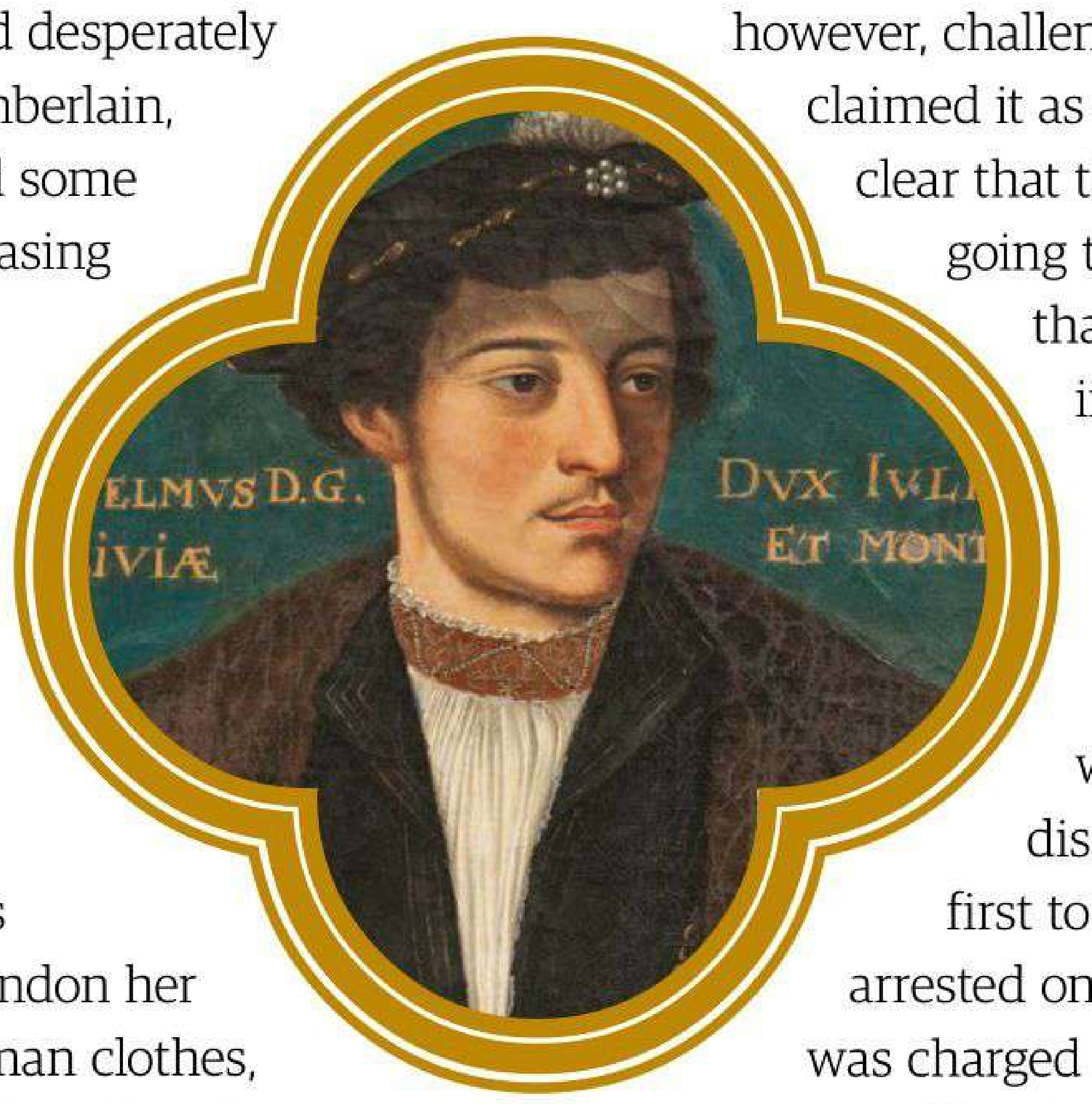
P. LEYENDECKER


Catherine Howard, the young wife that married Hanry after Anne of Cleves

After complaining to Cromwell that, "If it were not to satisfy the world and my realm I would not do that I must do this day for none Earthly thing," Henry entered the chapel at Greenwich Palace on 6 January to solemnise his fourth wedding. Anne, who accepted a ring from Henry engraved with "God send me well to keep", was probably still oblivious to the king's reaction to her.

The couple were ceremonially put to bed together that night, where Henry (as he confessed to Cromwell the next day) "felt her belly and her breasts," which "struck me so to the heart when I felt them that I had neither will nor courage to proceed further in other matters." Anne, who seems to have received little to no education on just what being a wife entailed, may not have realised that more was expected of her on her wedding night.

The couple continued to go to bed together in the weeks after their wedding but, as Anne recalled to her ladies, "When he comes to bed he kisses me, and taketh me by the hand, and biddeth me, Good night, sweetheart: and in the morning kisses me, and biddeth me, Farewell, darling." She then asked her attendants innocently, "Is this not enough?" Eventually Henry abandoned even the pretence of sharing a bed with her.



While at first Anne was oblivious to Henry's dislike of her, Cromwell was all too aware. As the architect of the marriage, he had a vested interest in ensuring its success and desperately enjoined the queen's chamberlain, the Earl of Rutland, to find some way to make her more pleasing towards the king. When this had no success, the minister called Rutland and the rest of Anne's council to him and, "Required them to counsel their mistress to use all pleasantries," towards her husband. This may have led Anne to abandon her heavy, unfashionable German clothes, instead appearing at court in a French hood, which daringly displayed the wearer's hair and had been popularised in England by Henry's second wife, Anne Boleyn. This did little to change the king's opinion of his bride and, when Anne made her official entry to London on 4 February, the two travelled in separate barges.

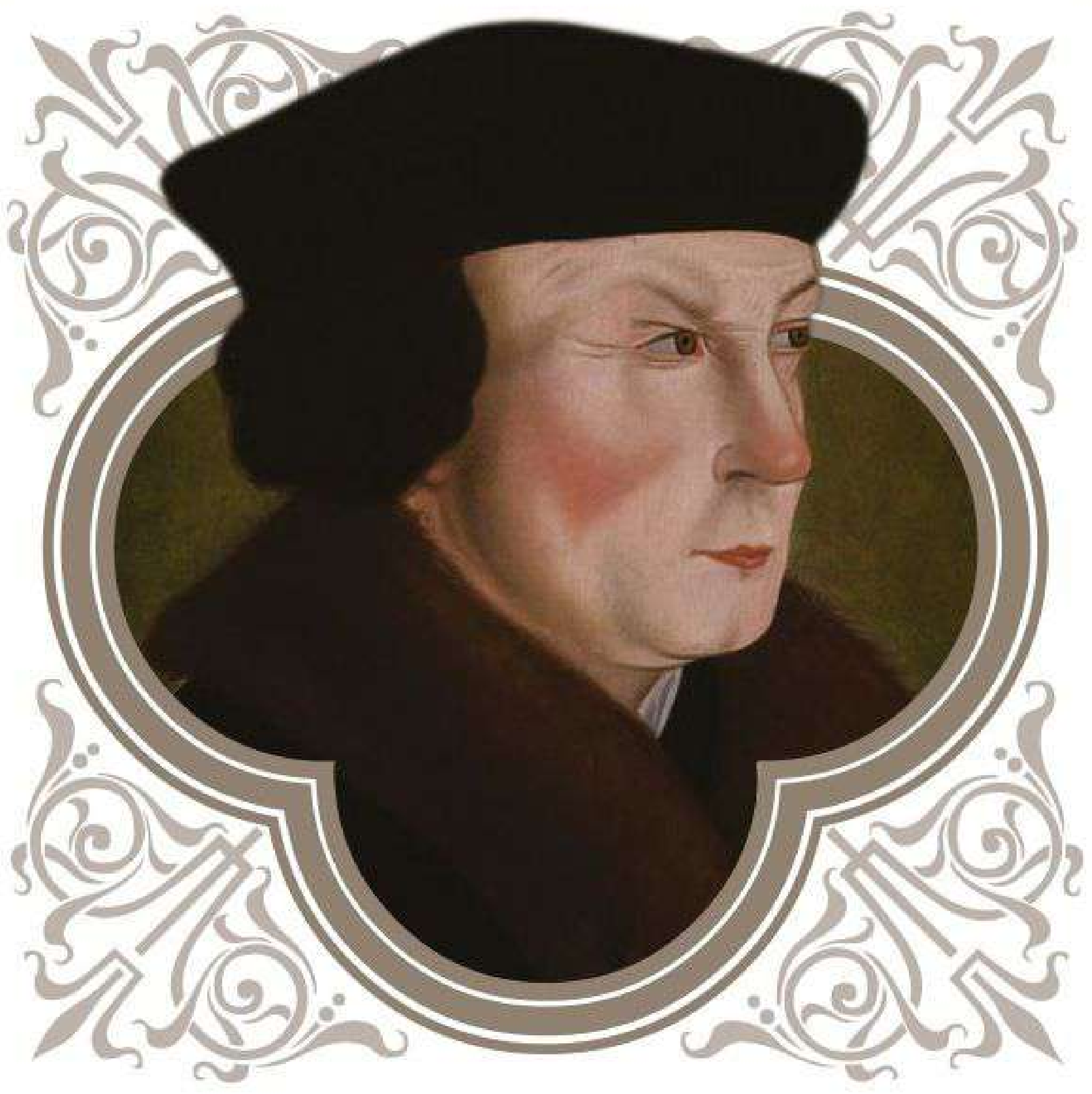
Henry had initially been attracted to Anne for the political alliance with her brother. Yet, in the early months of 1540, this also began to become undesirable. William of Cleves had inherited the German duchy of Guelders some years before, which gave Cleves important access to the coast for the first time. His acquisition of the duchy was, however, challenged by the emperor, who claimed it as his. By early 1540, it was clear that the matter of Guelders was going to lead to war, something that risked dragging England into a foreign war on behalf of Cleves.

As the political situation continued to deteriorate, the benefits of an alliance with Cleves entirely disappeared. Cromwell was the first to suffer, with the minister arrested on 10 June 1540. Although he was charged with treason rather than any specific misconduct concerning the Cleves marriage, it was clear that it was Henry's marriage that had led to the sudden disfavour in which the minister found himself. He was soon executed.

In late June 1540 Anne was abruptly dismissed from court and sent to Richmond Palace by her husband. While these orders were ostensibly to keep her safe from the plague in London, it is clear that Anne knew that this was nothing more than a pretext. On 26 June, she summoned her brother's ambassador, Carl Harst, to her presence, to complain of her treatment. While Harst sought to reassure her that Richmond was not very far from court, he was surprised when the queen told him that she knew what had happened to Henry's divorced first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and that there were rumours that Henry intended to discard her for a lady-in-waiting. In this, she was to be proved entirely correct.

In the early hours of 6 July 1540, Anne was awoken by a messenger from court. He informed her that the king had doubts about the validity of her marriage and that he required her consent for the matter to be considered in a church court. Anne immediately summoned Harst, and the pair sat together in her apartments for some time while she digested the news.

Sometime after four in the morning, Anne summoned her chancellor, Lord Rutland, who noted that she seemed to take the matter "heavily". The queen, who appears to have feared sharing the fate of Henry's earlier wives - particularly that suffered by Anne Boleyn - meekly acquiesced to the king's demands, although Harst was furious, returning at once to court to berate the king's ministers. While he was away, Anne was interrogated by Thomas Audeley, Henry's lord chancellor, and Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, as to the lack of consummation of her marriage, although she refused to speak on the matter.



The fall of Thomas Cromwell

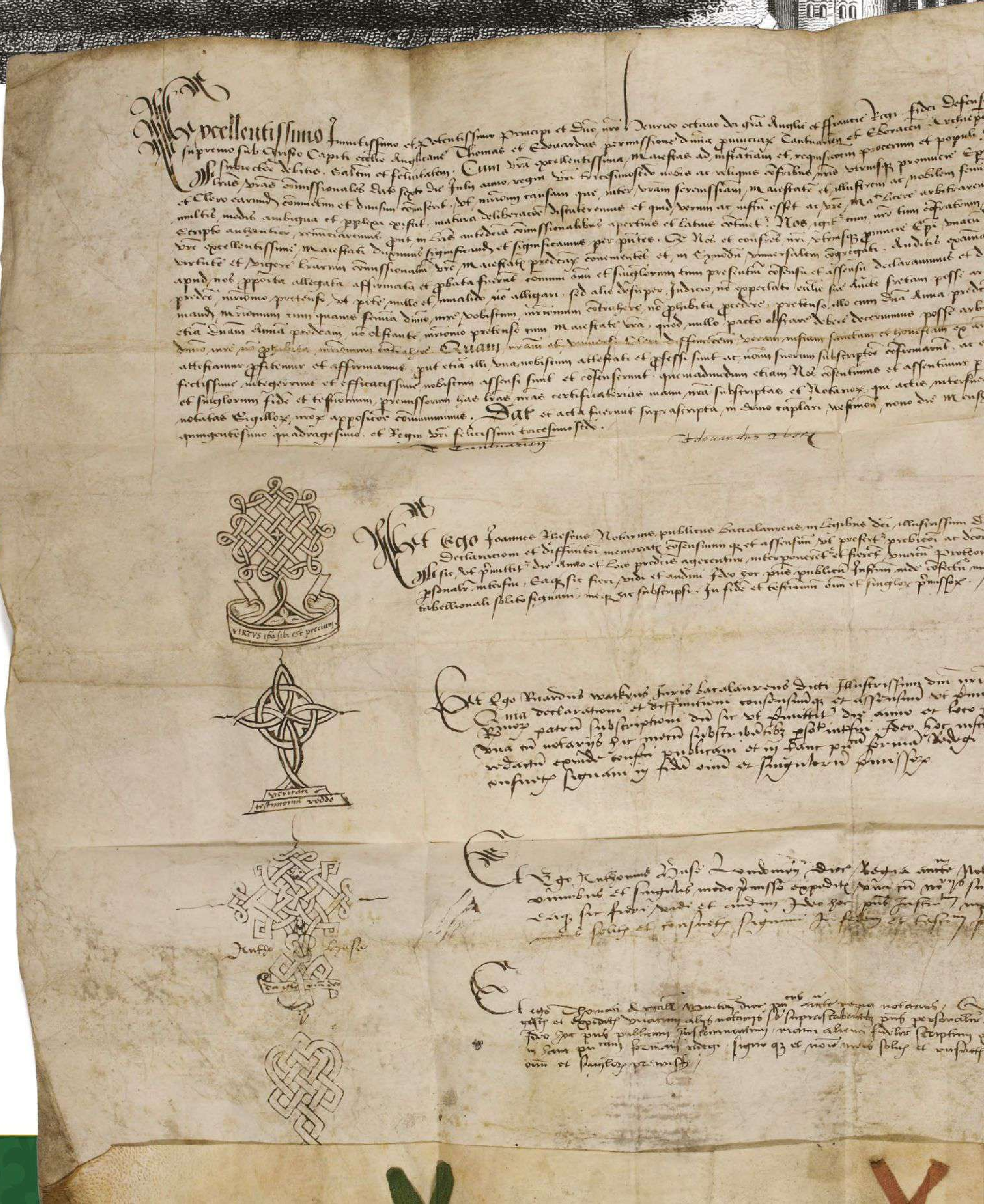
Henry VIII's chief minister was blamed for the failure of the king's fourth marriage

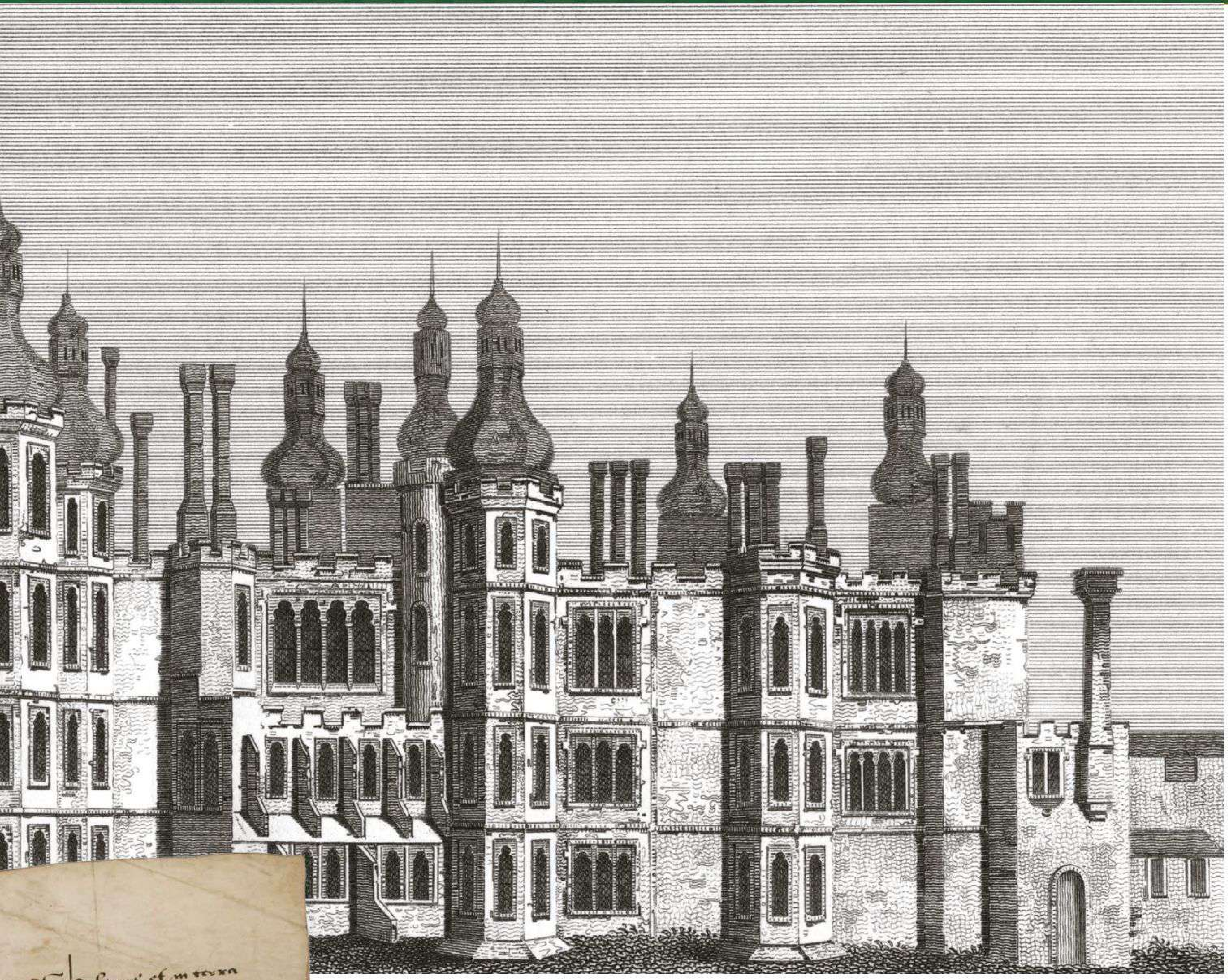
Thomas Cromwell, the son of a Putney blacksmith, used his intelligence and political skills to rise at court, becoming the king's chief minister in the early 1530s. While there is some debate over the nature of his religious beliefs, it is clear that Cromwell was interested in building links with the growing Protestant movement on the continent. He first suggested the marriage alliance with the Schmalkaldic League and sent his own ambassador, Christopher Mont, to negotiate the match.

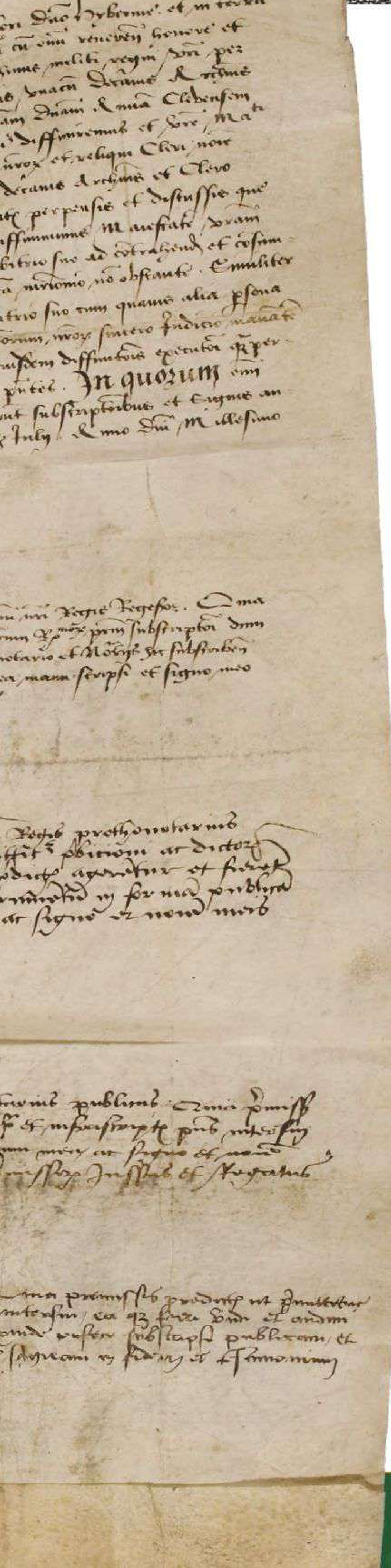
Initially pleased with his success, Cromwell was soon horrified to discover the extent of the king's dislike of his bride. It would later be recalled by the minister's rival on the council, Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, that, "the marriage only lasted one night and ruined Cromwell." Sensing the minister's weakening position, Gardiner launched an attack against Cromwell's ally, Dr Barnes, a well-known religious reformer and an associate of Martin Luther. Barnes was burned for heresy on 30 June 1540, with the minister able to do nothing to assist him.

The end for Cromwell came sooner than he can have expected. On 10 June 1540, as he entered the council chamber, he found his fellow councillors seated, having begun the session without him. On commenting, "You were in a great hurry, gentleman," he went to take his usual seat. The Duke of Norfolk, with whom he had recently quarrelled, then called out, "Cromwell, do not sit there; that is no place for thee. Traitors do not sit amongst gentlemen." In spite of his protestations that he was no traitor, Cromwell was promptly arrested and taken to the Tower of London.

Even in the Tower, Cromwell had hopes for his life and agreed to provide all the information he could on the king's marriage and possible grounds for divorce. While this proved useful to Henry, it was not enough to save the minister. On 28 July 1540, Cromwell was led out of his prison to be beheaded.







LEFT The nullification of Henry VIII's marriage with Anne of Cleves, which was agreed by both parties a mere six months after the initial marriage

ABOVE Richmond Palace was one of the residences given to Anne

As soon as Anne's consent was obtained, a convocation of the leading clergy was summoned to Westminster. On 7 July, the clergymen unanimously agreed that, "The king and Anne of Cleves were nowise bound by the marriage solemnised between them," due to a childhood betrothal of Anne's, the lack of consummation and Henry's failure to consent to the marriage.

Anne was probably unaware that the matter would be heard so quickly, and was shocked when word was sent to her later on that day. While the English commissioners informed the king that she took the news well and "without alteration of countenance," Carl Harst reported that she cried and screamed, complaining that she had given herself to one man and that they could simply never divorce until the bitter death.

On hearing, however, that she would receive favourable treatment in return for her consent to the annulment, she calmed herself, agreeing to write to the king to confirm that "the pretended matrimony between us is void and of none effect," and accepting the title of the king's 'sister', giving her precedence over every woman in England, save any future queen and the king's two daughters. She also received Richmond and Bletchingley Palaces as her residences and a generous pension. Shortly afterwards, she sent her wedding ring to Henry, asking that, "it might be broken in pieces as a thing which she knew of no force or value."

The abrupt end to Henry's fourth marriage was met with incredulity and ridicule across Europe. The Emperor Charles V appeared perplexed on hearing the news, merely asking what the doubts over the marriage were. The king of France was even more confused, asking, when he was informed, "What, with the matrimony made with the queen that now is?" On being informed that this was indeed the case, he merely sighed and became quiet.

> "Surprisingly, after the end of their marriage, Anne seems to have got on well with Henry"

John Frederick of Saxony was furious, and the Schmalkaldic League broke off relations with England. While Anne's sister, the Electress of Saxony, continued to refer to her sister as queen of England, John Frederick would later refuse to have any dealings with Henry, whom he referred to as that "crazy man". Anne initially believed her brother would "slay her" for the dishonour that she had brought to the family if she returned to Cleves, but he took the news relatively well, saying privately he was glad, "his sister had sped no worse."

Henry VIII wasted no time in replacing Anne, marrying Catherine Howard - one of the former queen's maids, on 28 July 1540. Surprisingly, after the end of their marriage, Anne seems to have got on well with Henry, with the pair dining together on occasion. She was also friendly with Catherine Howard, with whom she danced at court at New Year 1541.

Anne enjoyed her independence, appearing (as the French ambassador noted) "as joyous as ever, and wears new dresses every day." During Henry's lifetime, she was able to live in considerable comfort, with the king topping up her pension when required. She remained a part of the English royal family for close to a decade after her former husband's death in January 1547, riding in the same carriage as Princess Elizabeth at Mary I's coronation in 1553.

Anne of Cleves was to be the last survivor of Henry VIII's six wives, dying at Chelsea on 15 July 1557 at the age of only 41, ten years after her husband's death. Although wedded to Henry for only a brief six months, her life was entirely defined by her relationship to England's most married monarch, and she never again left the country of which she had been, so briefly, queen consort.

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From lord to king

Henry VIII and Ireland

Henry VIII embarked upon many foreign policy adventures, but a perennial source of frustration and fascination lay just across the Irish Sea

Words JON WRIGHT

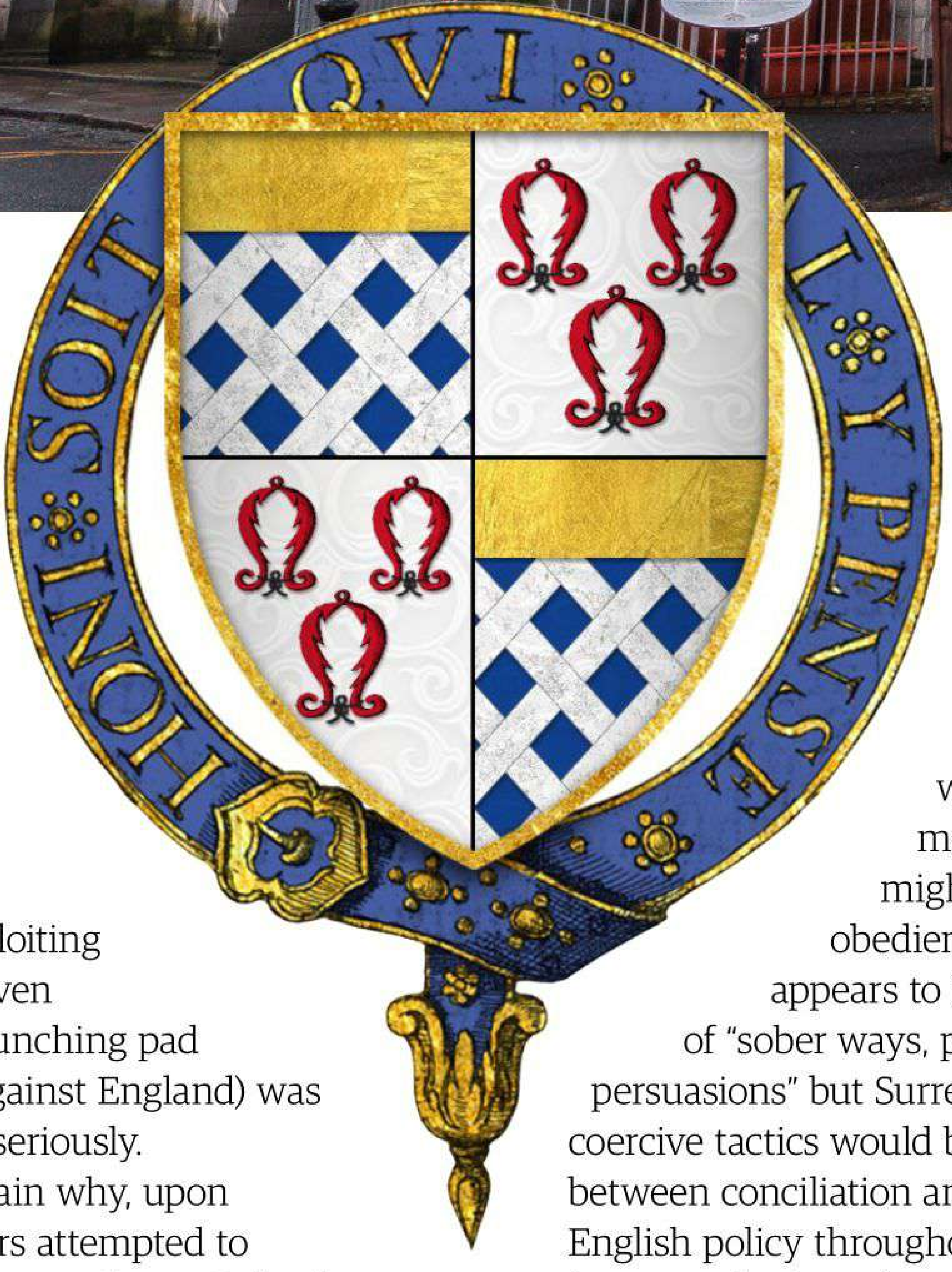
English monarchs had claimed lordship over Ireland since the 12th century, but their authority had always been decidedly limited. Wishful thinking about the reach of English influence was often stymied by political and cultural realities. By the reign of Henry VIII genuine English power, and the rule of English law, was centred on Dublin and the surrounding counties of Meath, Kildare, Westmeath and Louth, which made up the so-called Pale. Other urban centres dotted around the island, including Drogheda, Wexford, Waterford, Cork, Limerick and Galway, were also faithful to the crown, along with the royal fortress at Carrickfergus in the north. Beyond these enclaves, the mighty earls of Ormond, Desmond and Kildare, descendants of Medieval Anglo-Norman conquerors, held sway across large areas of central and southern Ireland. These earldoms were notionally loyal to England but were also fiercely independent and sustained a culture in which English and Gaelic law and language intertwined. Further west and north, a dizzying array of Gaelic chieftains, with little or no affection for English intrusion, made up a tapestry of shifting allegiances and frequent internecine strife.

> "If political chaos across the Irish Sea spiralled too far out of control, this could distract from other foreign policy goals"

The English crown had long recognised that, beyond the Pale, it was dependent on the services of the Anglo-Irish earldoms to maintain some measure of order, and members of these families had routinely served as the king's deputy or lieutenant in Ireland. During the early Tudor period, the FitzGerald earls of Kildare had become the most dominant figures: shoring up English authority while skilfully expanding the family's own influence. By 1518, no fewer than 24 Gaelic chieftains paid tribute to the Kildares, but at the same time, it was almost taken for granted that the Earl of Kildare would serve as the chief official representative of the English crown in Ireland.

Rule over Ireland was troublesome and expensive: even the basic matter of defending the Pale against raids was a constant irritation. Moreover, a deeply prejudicial attitude toward the Irish with, as one contemporary put it, their "wild shamrock manners" pervaded Tudor culture. Nonetheless, Ireland remained important to the Tudors. If political chaos across the Irish

The 10th Earl of Kildare renounces his allegiance to King Henry VIII in 1534



ABOVE Dublin Castle, the seat of English power in Tudor Ireland

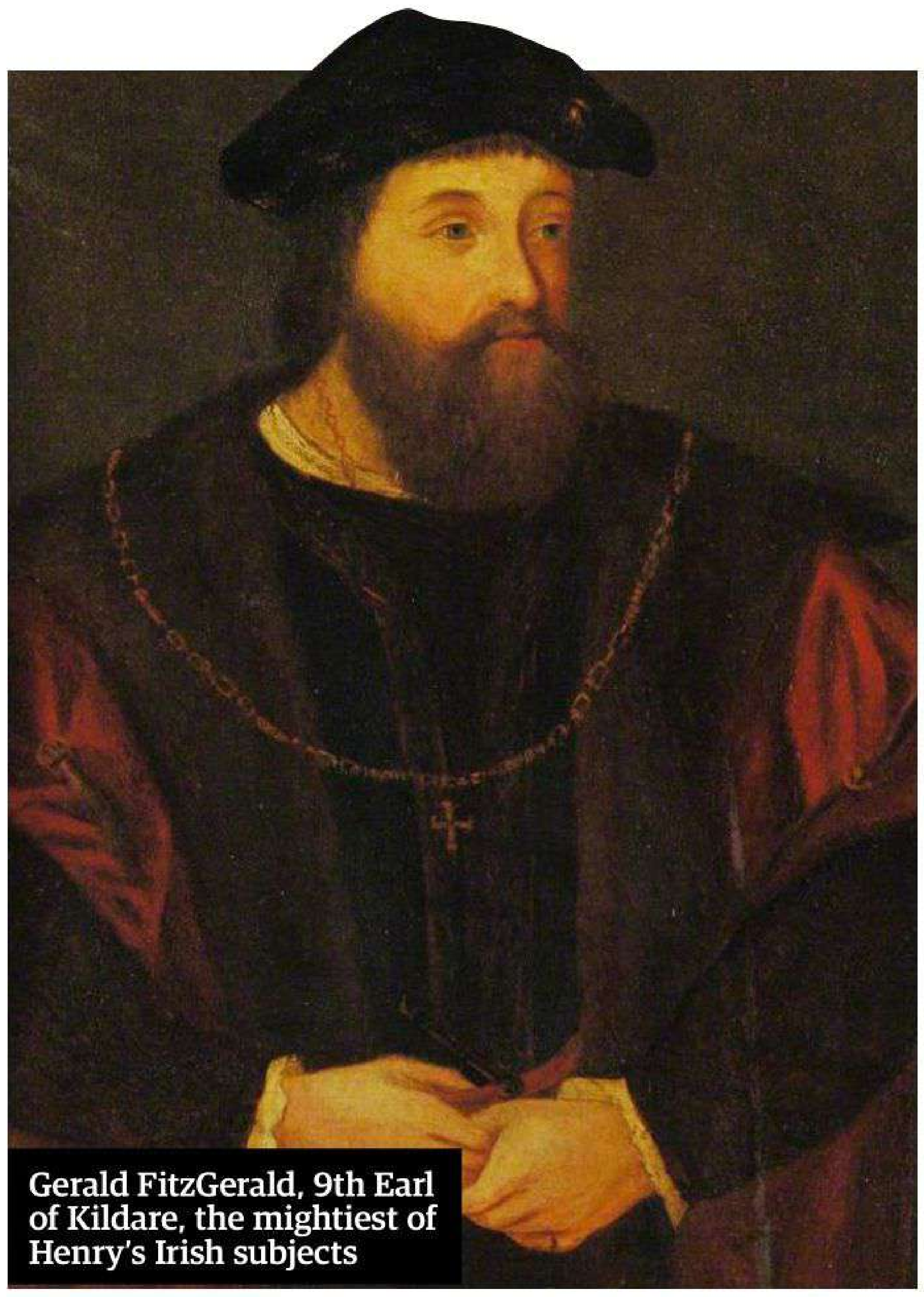
LEFT The coat of arms of Sir Anthony St Leger, the dominant English figure in Irish politics in the 1540s

Sea spiralled too far out of control, this could distract from other foreign policy goals and could easily become the focus of factional squabbles at the English court. The possibility of rival European rulers exploiting such situations (or even using Ireland as a launching pad for military action against England) was likewise taken very seriously.

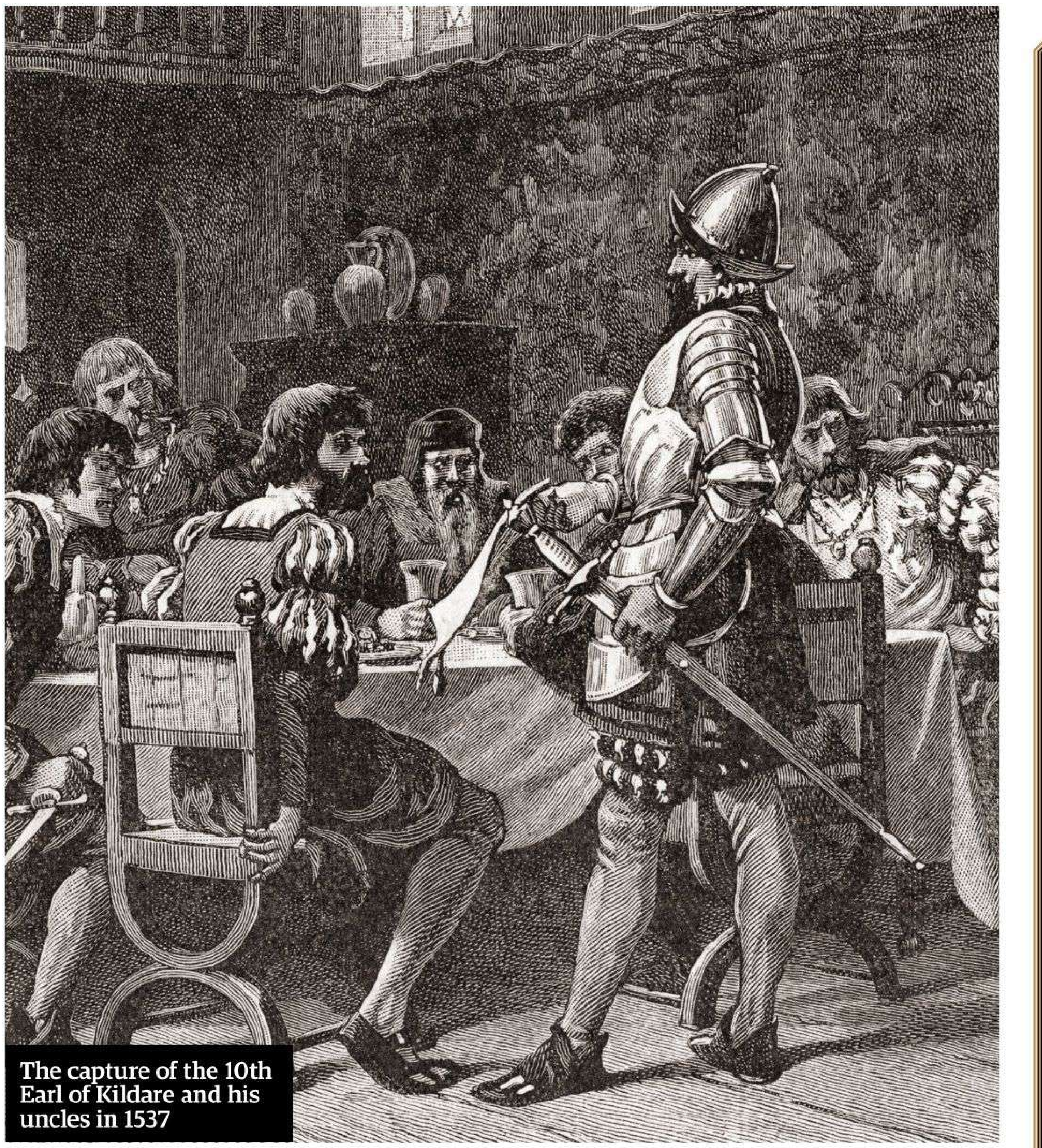
This helps to explain why, upon occasion, Tudor rulers attempted to exercise more direct control over Ireland. During the reign of Henry VII, the Earl of Kildare had lent support to the cause of Lambert Simnel, a pretender to the English throne, so for a brief - and largely unsuccessful - period in the 1490s an English deputy, Edward Poynings, had been sent to Ireland with ambitious plans for reform. Henry VIII pursued a similar policy early in his reign. By 1519 Gerald FitzGerald, the ninth Earl of Kildare, had fallen from favour with Henry and another English deputy - Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey - arrived in Ireland in 1520. With Kildare detained in England, Surrey was charged with determining "by which means and ways your grace might reduce this land to obedience and good order." Henry appears to have preferred the use of "sober ways, politic drifts, and amiable persuasions" but Surrey came to believe that more coercive tactics would be required. This tension between conciliation and conquest would define English policy throughout the Tudor era. In this instance, the issue became moot. Surrey explained that forcing the Irish into more subservient behaviour would require thousands of troops and take many years. Besides, by 1522 Henry was focused on conflicts with his European rivals and (as throughout this reign) he had no desire to spend large sums on his Irish policy. For the remainder of the 1520s the lieutenantship of Ireland would return to the hands of the great Irish earls, with Kildare and Ormond battling it out for primacy.

> "Cromwell was deeply suspicious of overmighty subjects such as Kildare"

By 1529, however, Henry once more turned his attention to matters across the Irish Sea. His illegitimate son Henry FitzRoy, Duke of Richmond,



Gerald FitzGerald, 9th Earl of Kildare, the mightiest of Henry's Irish subjects

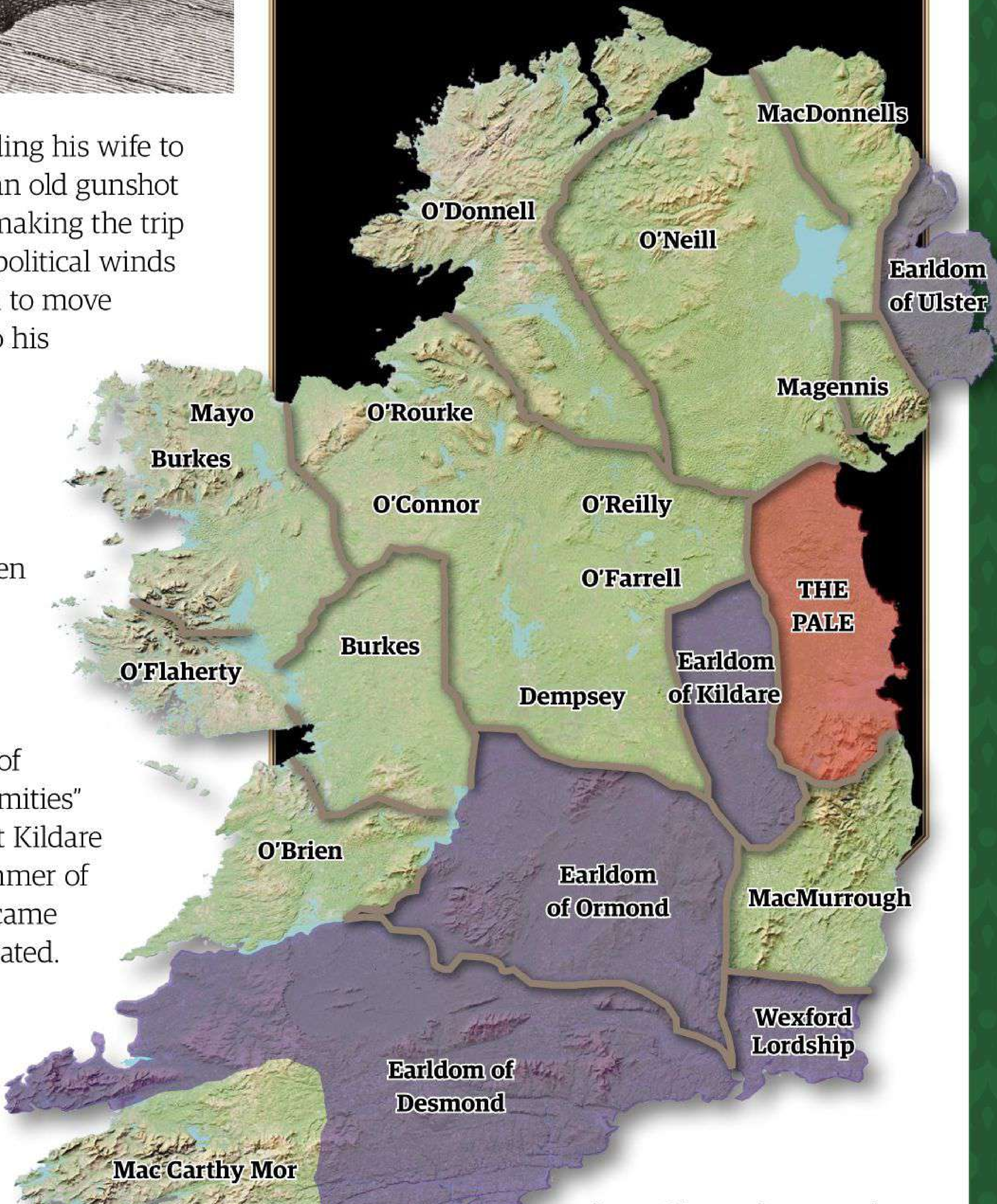


The capture of the 10th Earl of Kildare and his uncles in 1537

The big three

What were the origins of the most powerful Irish families of the early Tudor era?

The Kildare, Desmond and Ormond families dominated Irish politics during the Medieval and Early-Modern periods. All three were descended from lofty English and Welsh adventurers involved in the invasions of Ireland during the 12th century, and all three were formally granted their earldoms during the 14th century (Kildare in 1316, Ormond in 1328, and Desmond in 1329). Service and loyalty to the English crown brought rich rewards and even potential set-backs could be turned to advantage. An interesting intersection between English and Irish politics occurred in 1528 when the Earl of Ormond, Piers Butler, was convinced to abandon his title in order for Thomas Boleyn (father of Anne) to take up the earldom, despite Boleyn having only a decidedly tenuous claim. Butler was rewarded (inside a week) with the alternative title of Earl of Ossory and, by 1538, this minor blip in the Butler family fortunes was rectified with reinstallment to the earldom of Ormond. It took rather longer for the FitzGerald family to recover from its rebellious activities during the 1530s, but by the 1560s, they too had re-emerged as the earls of Kildare.



The Earldoms of Desmond, Ormond and Kildare, 1450

🟩 Land held by native Irish

🟪 Land held by Anglo-Irish

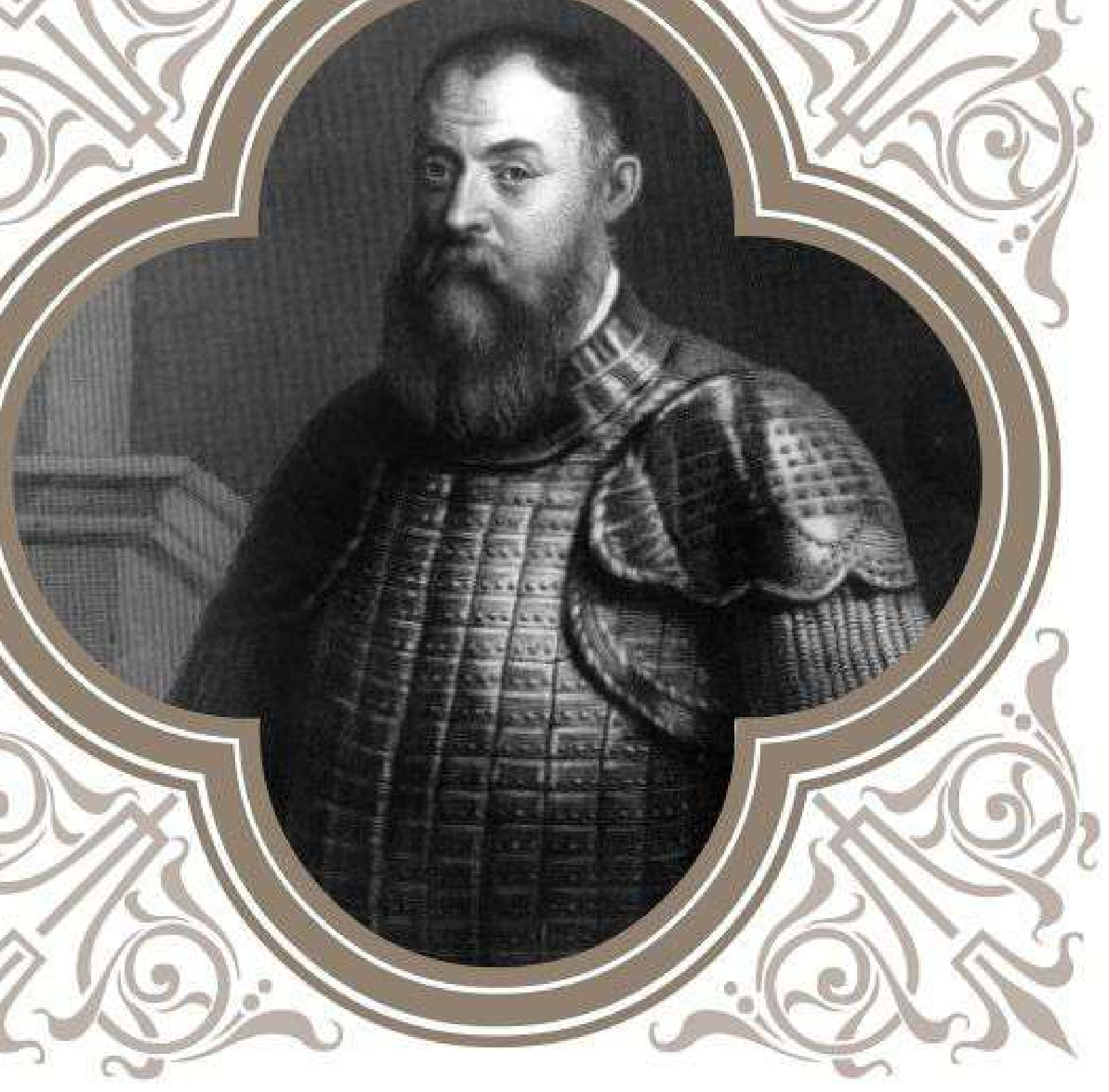
🟥 Land held by English King

was appointed as nominal lord lieutenant. Since Richmond was only a child, he required a representative and the task fell to Sir William Skeffington who arrived in Ireland in 1530. Skeffington's tenure as lord deputy began well. He recognised the need to sustain amicable relations with figures such as Kildare, who were crucial to maintaining order beyond the Pale. Unfortunately, this relationship quickly soured and, hamstrung by diminishing finances and resources, Skeffington was summoned home and, by the late summer of 1532, Kildare was reinstalled as the king's chief governor in Ireland.

The status quo was not destined to last for long. Thomas Cromwell, now ascendant at the English court, was determined to extend meaningful royal authority to many of the realm's outlying regions. And, as with Wales and the North of England, Ireland soon came into his sights. Cromwell was deeply suspicious of overmighty subjects such as Kildare. He found it intolerable that Kildare arrogantly believed that "if the king make any other deputy but him all the land shall be disordered; so as the king must depend upon his pleasure, and not he upon the king's." Cromwell began to appoint Kildare's rivals to key positions in Ireland and, in September 1533, Kildare was summoned to court. The Earl prevaricated, sending his wife to London with dubious reports of an old gunshot wound preventing Kildare from making the trip himself. Sensing which way the political winds were blowing, Kildare now began to move armaments from Dublin Castle to his personal strongholds.

> "Thomas Cromwell was determined to extend meaningful royal authority to many of the realm's outlying regions"

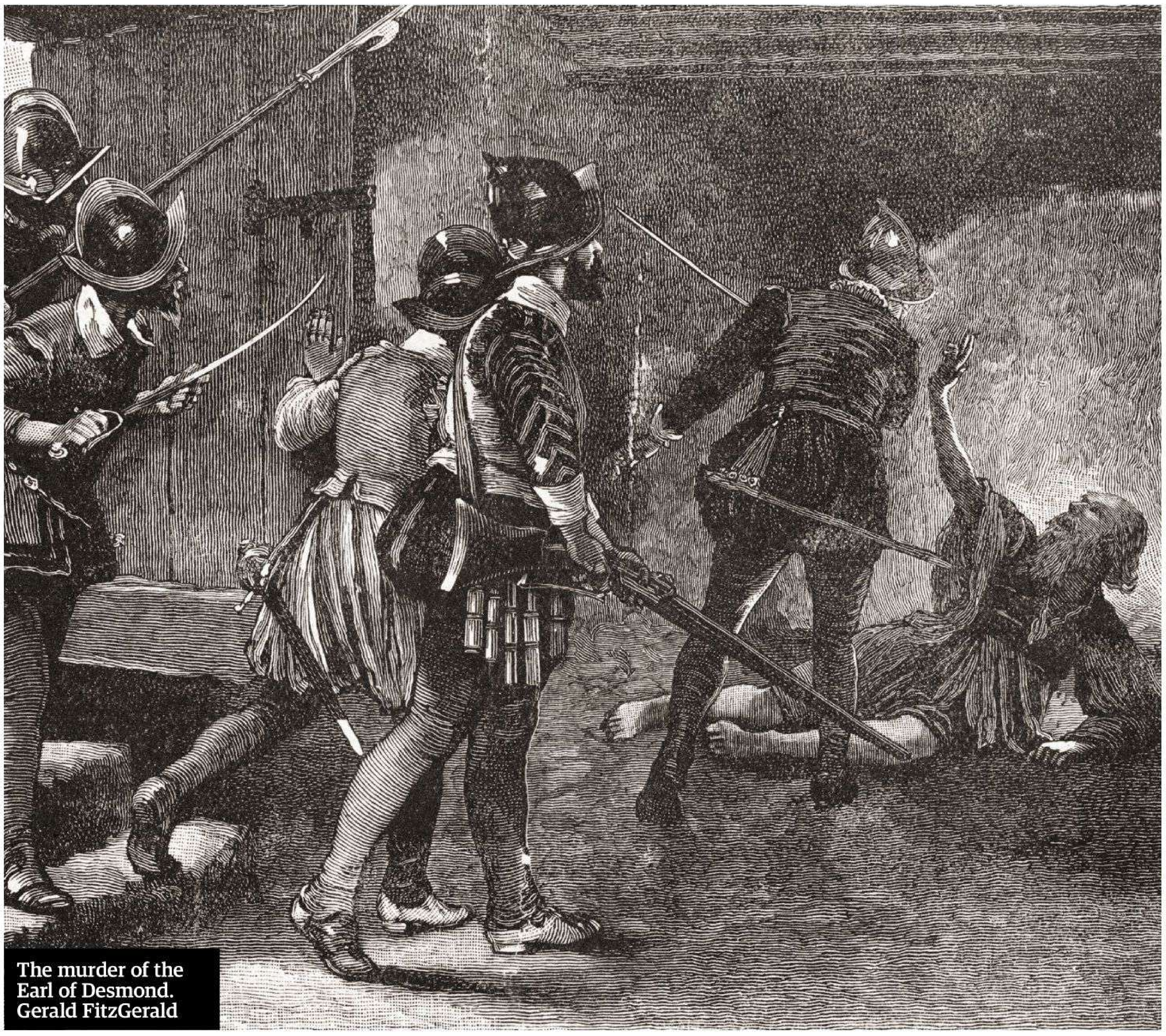
Kildare finally arrived at the English court in the spring of 1534. Plans were already afoot to reappoint Skeffington as his replacement. The Earl had been sure to leave his son, Thomas, lord Offaly, behind in Ireland as vice deputy, and as charges of "manifold enormities" were levelled at Kildare during the summer of 1534, Offaly became increasingly agitated. By June, Kildare was languishing in the Tower (he would die there in September) and Offaly was resigning his position and denouncing the policies of the Henrician regime. At this stage, it seems likely that the goal was to intimidate the English and secure Kildare's



A troubled legacy

Henry's controversial policies in Ireland would leave behind a mixture of problems and possibilities for his successors on the English throne

In the wake of Henry VIII's convoluted Irish interventions, Tudor monarchs would routinely oscillate between policies of coercion, reform and conciliation. Elizabeth I, for instance, would claim, in 1574, that it was best "to allure that rude and barbarous nation to civility rather by discreet handling than by force and shedding of blood," but such sentiments were often more honoured in the breach. For all the attempts at administrative change, rebellion was a recurrent problem: Shane O'Neill in the 1560s, the repeated revolts by the Desmond family during Elizabeth's reign, and, most famously, the nine-year war provoked by Hugh O'Neill, 2nd Earl of Tyrone, between 1594 and 1603. A bloody conflict spread out from Ulster, led to the involvement of Spain, played havoc with English court politics, and left a deep scar on the Irish memory. One constant in Tudor policy can, however, be discerned. Overreliance on the influence of Anglo-Irish families was no longer deemed safe, and this was one aspect of a broader policy of attempting to "anglicanise" Ireland: a trend epitomised by the plantation of English settlers which gathered steam during the Tudor era. One corollary, the imposition of Protestant religious beliefs, emerged as a chief source of Irish resentment and resistance.



The murder of the Earl of Desmond. Gerald FitzGerald

release and reappointment, but events quickly escalated. Offaly's rhetoric became ever more provocative: he would not live under "bondage and villainy" and would spare "not to put to death man, woman or child that be born in England." It was suggested that Henry's religious policies made him a traitor to Rome and Offaly's protest was portrayed as a righteous crusade. By late summer, Offaly and his troops were laying siege to Dublin Castle.

However, this was not an opportune moment to engage in brinkmanship with Henry VIII. Frustrated by the tortuous events that had led to the break with Rome, and troubled by stirrings of dissent elsewhere in the realm (not least in the North of England), Henry and Cromwell were determined to stamp out any sources of dissent or disloyalty. Offaly had hoped to entice rulers such as the pope and Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, to support his cause but, as one historian puts it, he received nothing but "prayers, promises and the odd shipload of arms." Despite this, Offaly (from September 1534, the tenth Earl of Kildare) made impressive military progress, prompting the arrival, in October, of William Skeffington and 2,300 English troops. Though ill-equipped, and even after the exactions of an unusually hard winter campaign, the English forces gained the upper hand. Kildare withdrew to his stronghold of Maynooth Castle but this, too, fell after a ten-day siege in March, 1535. Kildare surrendered himself in August and, despite having received promises that his life would be spared, he and five of his uncles were executed in London in February 1537.

In relative terms, English reprisals were not especially severe. There had been brutal moments such as the slaughter of the Irish garrison after the fall of Maynooth, but the number of formal executions following the rebellion (75) should be compared with the 178 that came in the wake of the Pilgrimage of Grace. Many in Ireland were allowed to buy their pardons, which perhaps reflects the fact that the Henrician government knew that it still had to devise some workable way of governing Ireland.

This was, assuredly, a thorny issue. The rebellion's failure was a catastrophe for the Kildares, though the family's supporters retained influence and found a new focus of loyalty in Offaly's surviving brother, Gerald. It might be imagined that the Kildares' great rivals, such as the Desmond and Ormond families, were delighted by the events of the mid-1530s but, in a sense, their

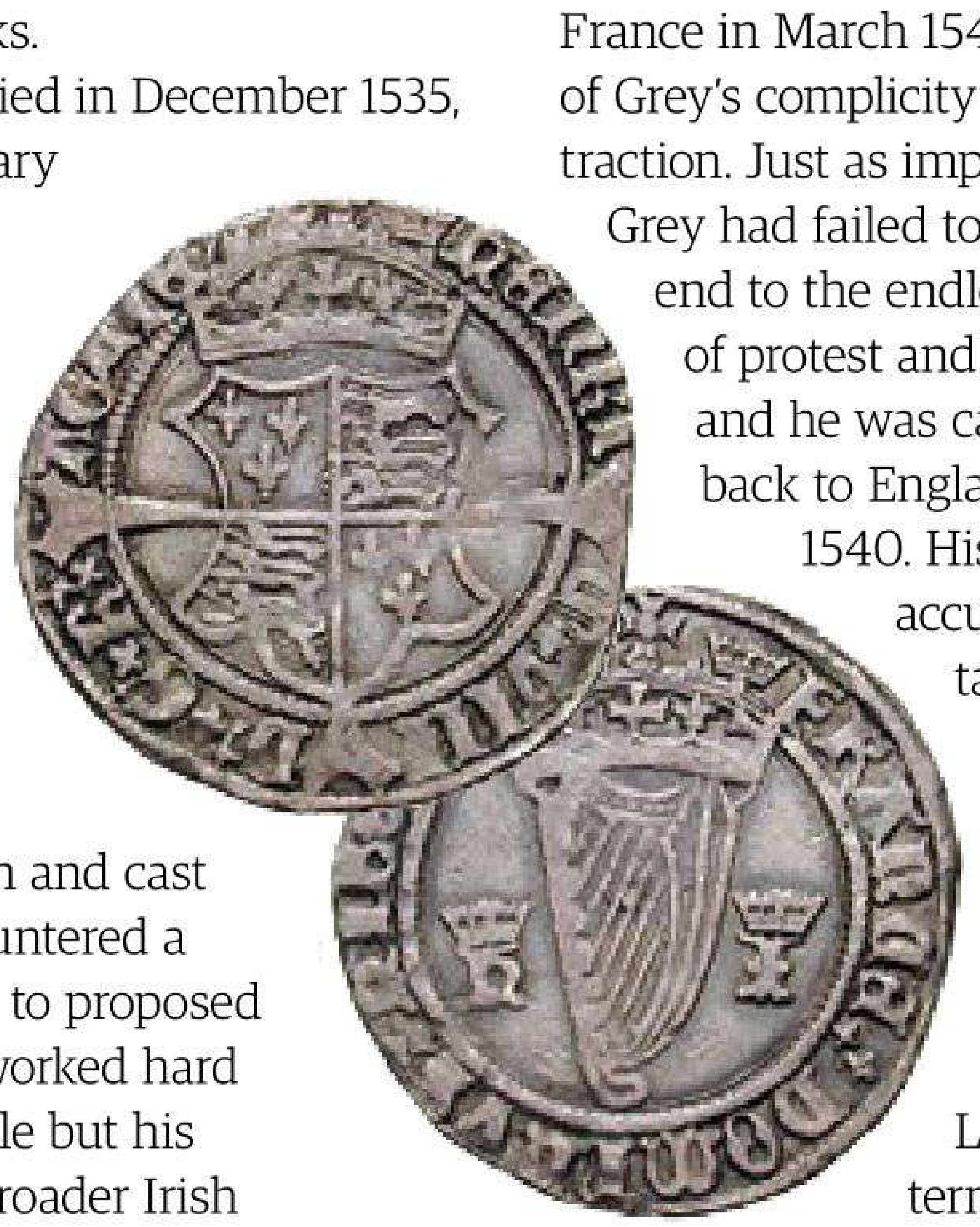
> "Before too long, Grey joined the ranks of eminent Tudors to be executed at the Tower"

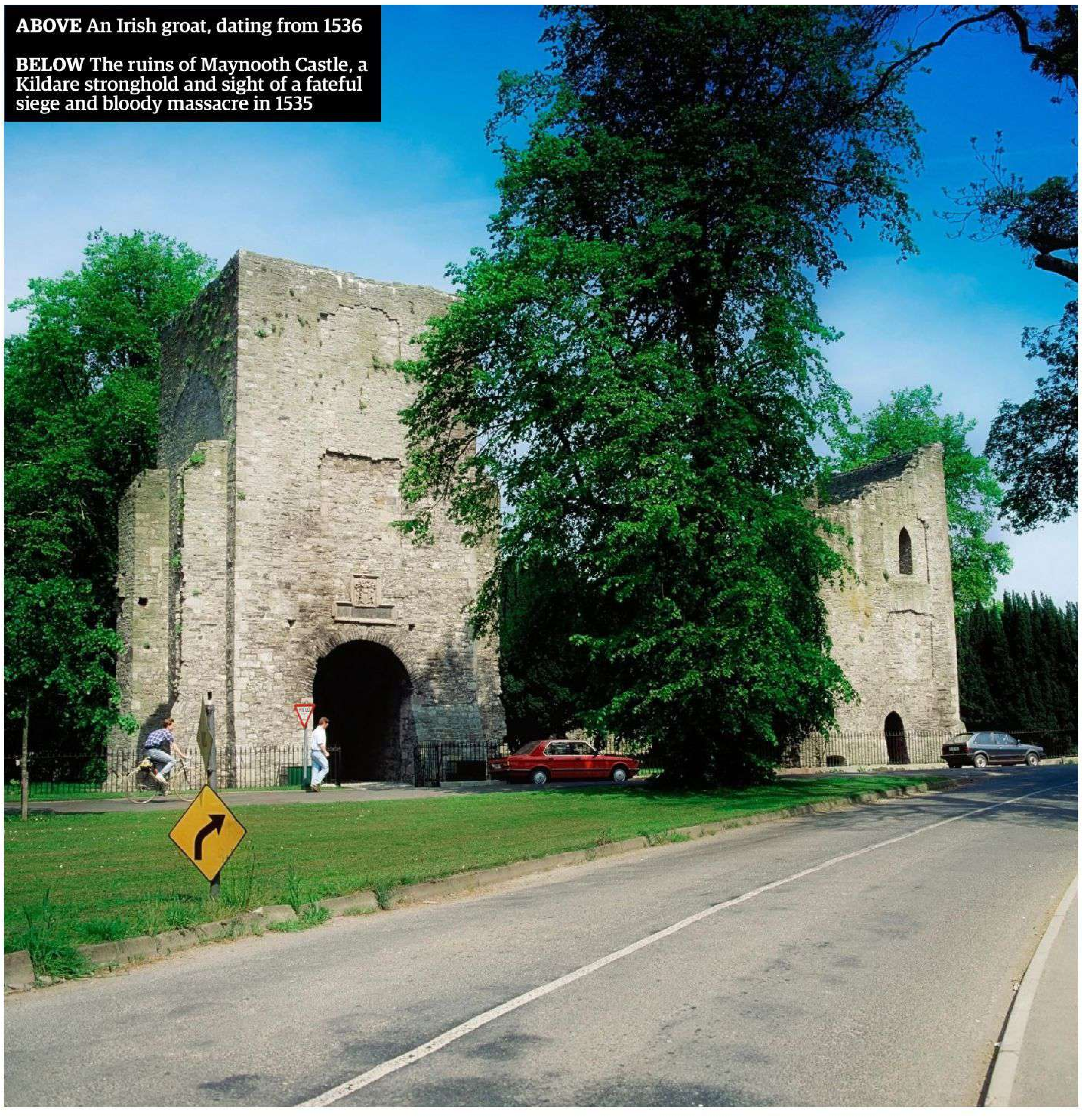
influence diminished in the eyes of the English crown: they were no longer quite so valuable as a counterbalance to the Kildares. This, if anything, further destabilised Irish politics. A sea-change in English policy was required and, from now on, it was deemed appropriate to appoint Englishmen as lord lieutenants and to ensure that they had standing armies at their backs.

William Skeffington had died in December 1535, lamented by one contemporary as "a very good man of war but not quick enough for Ireland", so first into the fray was Lord Leonard Grey. Grey oversaw Ireland's so-called "Reformation Parliament" between May 1536 and December 1537, which successfully implemented Henrician religious legislation and cast off papal authority, but encountered a stickier wicket when it came to proposed financial change. Grey also worked hard to rebuff raids against the Pale but his addiction to intervening in broader Irish political disputes and embarking on military campaigns won him few friends. One critic suggested that, through his aggressive policies, he was turning into "the Earl of Kildare newly born again." His enemies also suggested that, due to familial links, he was overly sympathetic to the Kildare cause and, when Gerald FitzGerald escaped to France in March 1540, rumours of Grey's complicity gained traction. Just as importantly, Grey had failed to bring an end to the endless round of protest and rebellion, and he was called back to England in May 1540. His enemies' accusations were taken seriously, and before too long, Grey joined the lengthening ranks of eminent Tudors to be executed at the Tower.

Next to grasp the Irish nettle was Sir Anthony St Leger, who would serve for six terms as Lord Deputy, the first of these between 1540 and 1548. St Leger enjoyed greater independence than his predecessors, largely thanks to the recent fall of Thomas Cromwell, and a policy emerged through which Gaelic chieftains would acknowledge Henry VIII's authority in return for the formal regranting of their titles and lands. A surprisingly large number of chieftains took up the offer. Just as significantly, in 1541 the Irish parliament recognised Henry VIII as "king of Ireland": until this point, English monarchs had only styled themselves as lords of Ireland. All of which may give the impression that the 1540s represented a relatively peaceable period in Anglo-Irish relations. To an extent, this was true. In theory, at least, the Irish were to be considered as subjects rather than a people to be conquered. It was also useful for the English to be able to rely on Irish troops during conflicts with France and Scotland. For all this, however, much remained unsettled. The financial aspects of government were always problematic: by the mid-1540s the cost of overseeing rule in Ireland was roughly double the income that Ireland provided – a fact not lost on the increasingly penny-pinching Henry VIII. Meanwhile, the tensions and resentments within Irish society remained deeply entrenched. For the rest of the Tudor era, English monarchs would flit between periods of conciliation and dreams of conquest, all the time sustaining an insulting belief in the need to civilise and anglicanise the supposedly barbarous Irish. The Irish, understandably, were not always best pleased with such an assessment.

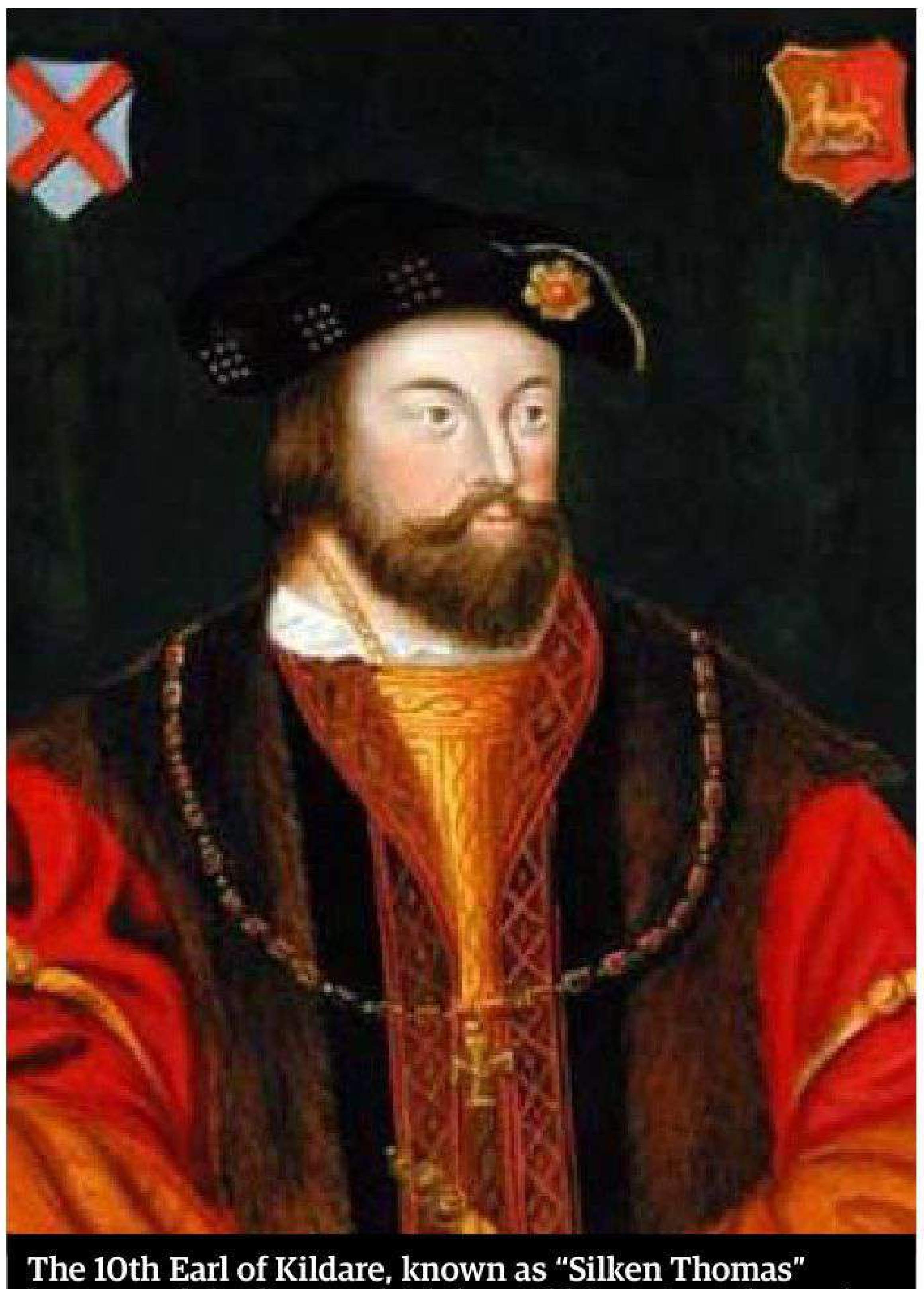
> "The Irish were to be considered as subjects rather than a people to be conquered"





ABOVE An Irish groat, dating from 1536

BELOW The ruins of Maynooth Castle, a Kildare stronghold and sight of a fateful siege and bloody massacre in 1535



The 10th Earl of Kildare, known as "Silken Thomas" because of the finery which he and his retinue donned at the outset of their protest against Henrician rule

© Alamy, Wiki, Getty

The life of Catherine Howard

She's been described as dim-witted, naïve and promiscuous, but was Henry VIII's fifth wife guilty of her crimes or a victim of a far darker one?

Words ALICEA FRANCIS

They say that there is one corridor in Hampton Court Palace where the air turns cold. Listen carefully, they say, and you will hear the screams of a young woman, or perhaps glimpse her running through what is now known as the Haunted Gallery. It is, so the story goes, the ghost of Catherine Howard – Henry VIII's ill-fated fifth wife, who was beheaded for high treason after her debauched sexual past was revealed. She has since often been painted at worst a scheming adulteress, at best a silly little girl. Who, after all, would dare to be disloyal to a king infamous for lopping off heads at the earliest opportunity? Surely there is more to this twisted tale than meets the eye?

Catherine was born into one of the most powerful families in Tudor England, but this did not secure her a privileged upbringing. Her father, Edmund Howard, was a younger son of the 2nd Duke of Norfolk, and it was his eldest brother, Thomas, who inherited the wealth and title. Edmund, meanwhile, relied on handouts to support his growing family. When his first wife died, he was left with 11 children to fend for, and quickly married a wealthy widow. In 1531, his niece, Anne Boleyn, appointed him comptroller of Calais, and he and his new wife departed for the Continent. Edmund left his younger children in the care of family members – Catherine, who was perhaps eight or nine years old, was sent to live with her step-grandmother, the dowager duchess of Norfolk.

The dowager duchess had many young wards, who lived together in her home at Horsham. There, they received an education of sorts, but were largely left to their own devices. Drinking and debauchery were rife, with the male members of the household often taking advantage of their female cohabitees. When Catherine was in her early teens, she was allegedly molested by her music teacher Henry Mannox, who, she would later claim, "touched the secret parts" of her body without permission. When the dowager duchess discovered the pair in a compromising position, she "gave straight charge both to her and Mannox that they should never be alone together" and issued Catherine "two or three blows" around the head. This was an age when the issue of consent was yet to be called into question – the blame for this indiscretion lay clearly at Catherine's feet.

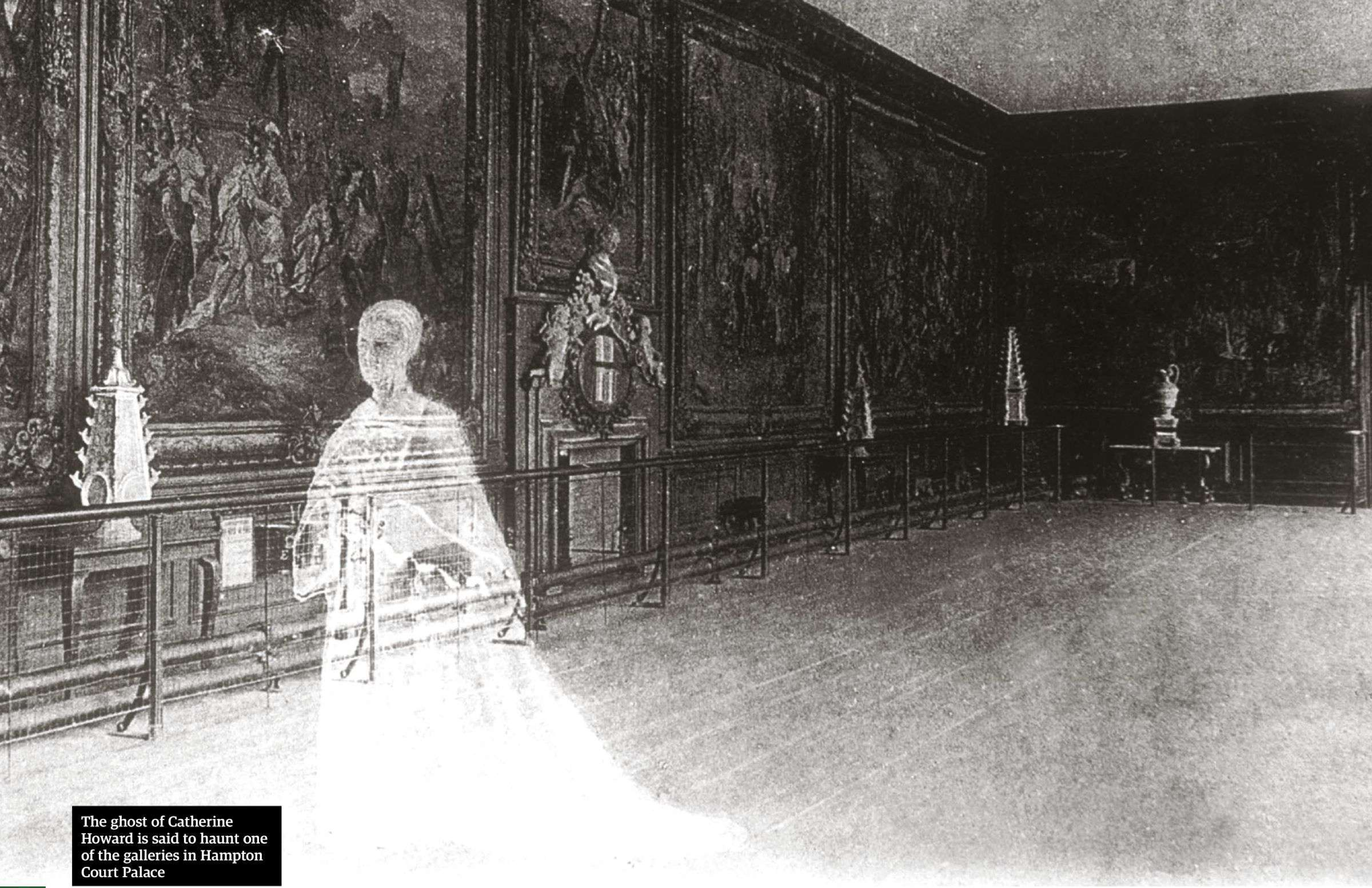
> "She was horrified when she heard that Catherine was having an affair with a mere servant"

They were still seeing each other in 1538 when Mary Lascelles arrived as a nursemaid. She was appalled when she heard that Catherine was having an affair with a servant. When Mary warned Mannox of the danger he was in, he replied: "I have had her by the c**t and she hath said to me that I shall have her maiden-head though it be painful to her, not doubting that I will be good to

Catherine Howard

b.1523-d.1542

At the age of 16 or 17, Catherine became the fifth wife of Henry VIII, though their marriage ended with her execution following the revelation of her scandalous past.



The ghost of Catherine Howard is said to haunt one of the galleries in Hampton Court Palace

her hereafter." When Catherine heard what he had said, she flew into a rage, declaring: "I will never be nought with you and able to marry me ye be not." She called off the relationship immediately.

Shortly after, Catherine was moved to the dowager duchess' household at Lambeth. By this time, Catherine had blossomed into an attractive and charming young woman. Less flattering adjectives like 'promiscuous', 'giggly' and 'dim-witted' have also been bandied around by various biographers. She and the other girls of the household slept together in a room known as the maidens' chamber, the key to which often fell into the hands of the other sex. Night-time visitors would bring the girls wine, strawberries and other treats that they had stolen from the kitchens, in return for 'entertainment'.

One of these visitors was Francis Derehem, the dowager duchess' secretary. He took a shine to 15-year-old Catherine, and their affair went beyond flirtation. When the bed hangings were pulled shut, the noises that came from within made it explicit to everyone in the room what they were up to.

But it appeared, at least, that Dereham was sincere in his pursuit of Catherine, as they soon began referring to one another as husband and wife, and reportedly signed a pre-contract of marriage. Their happiness was interrupted, however, when in 1539, Mannox caught wind of the affair, and in a fit of jealousy, wrote a letter to the dowager duchess advising her to go the maidens' chamber after dark. Dereham was discovered was sent away to Ireland as punishment. Catherine was devastated.

"The duke saw an opportunity to use Catherine as a pawn in his ambitious game"

It wasn't long before she too was sent away, but her new home would be far grander than Dereham's. Her uncle Thomas Howard – now the 3rd Duke of Norfolk – found her a place at Hampton Court Palace as a lady-in-waiting to the king's new wife, Anne of Cleves. It was everything Catherine had dreamed of – alive with music, dancing and banquets… not to mention eligible young men. But it was the obese and ageing monarch who would eventually claim her heart.

Following the scandal involving the Duke's niece Anne Boleyn, the Howards had fallen from favour, and he was desperate to restore his power. Conveniently for him, Henry had been disappointed when, on New Year's Day 1540, Anne of Cleves had arrived in England looking far from the fair maiden he had seen in portraits. Several months on, the marriage had yet to be consummated and the duke saw an opportunity to use Catherine as a pawn in his ambitious game. Telling his niece exactly how to behave and dress, the teenager soon caught the 49-year-old sovereign's eye, and within months he was smitten.

Henry's marriage to Anne of Cleves was annulled on 9 July 1540 on the grounds of non-consummation, and he married Catherine just over two weeks later on 28 July. For a while, it seemed that the king – who for years had been suffering from ill health – was rejuvenated. He embarked on a lavish spending spree to celebrate his marriage, ordering the refurbishment of Whitehall Palace and gifting his bride luxurious textiles, jewels and land. She adopted a new motto, which she had embroidered on her sleeves: "Non autre volonte que la sienne," meaning "no other wish but his." It was a foreboding sign of what was to come. No plans were made for a coronation. It is assumed that Henry was waiting for news of a pregnancy – a spare for his heir. But the news never came. Dispelling the rumours, the king's physician insisted that it was not a result of impotency, as he had reported having "pollutiones nocturnas" while with Anne of Cleves – what we'd now call wet dreams. In early 1541, Henry suffered a bout of depression, and shut himself off from Catherine. It's said that during this time she began her affair with courtier Thomas Culpeper.

Culpeper was one of the monarch's favourites. As a gentleman to the king's privy chamber, he had intimate access to Henry's life, helping him to dress and even sleeping in his bedchamber. He has been described as a "beautiful youth", but with a dark past. In 1539, he was accused of raping a park-keeper's wife and murdering a villager who had tried to defend her. It is this history that has cast some doubt upon the accusations that would soon surround Culpeper and Queen Catherine.

If the rumours are to be believed, Catherine began meeting with Culpeper in private, with one of her older ladies-in-waiting – Lady Rochford – facilitating the meetings. When Henry and Catherine set off on their annual Great Progress to the north in June 1541, Culpeper went with them, and it's believed that the lovers had many an opportunity to misbehave en route. It was that summer that Catherine supposedly wrote the infamous love letter: "Master Coulpeper… I never longed so muche for [a] thynge as I do to se you and to speke wyth you, the wyche I trust shal be shortely now, the wyche dothe comforthe me verie much whan I thynk of ett and wan I thynke agan that you shall departe from me agayne ytt makes my harte to dye to thynke what fortune I have that I cannot be always yn your company."

While some see this letter as clear proof of her infidelity, others have interpreted it as a means of appeasement. Could it be that Culpeper knew of her past and Catherine felt pressured to say whatever it took to keep him happy – and quiet? Or could it be that the letter was simply forged?

After all, it was found very conveniently in Culpeper's room following a chain of events set in motion by John Lascelles – the brother of Mary, the nursemaid who had come between Catherine and Mannox at Horsham. John had heard Mary talk of the queen's "light" ways, and reported this to Thomas Cranmer, the archbishop of Canterbury.

ENTRY TO THE TRAITORS GATE

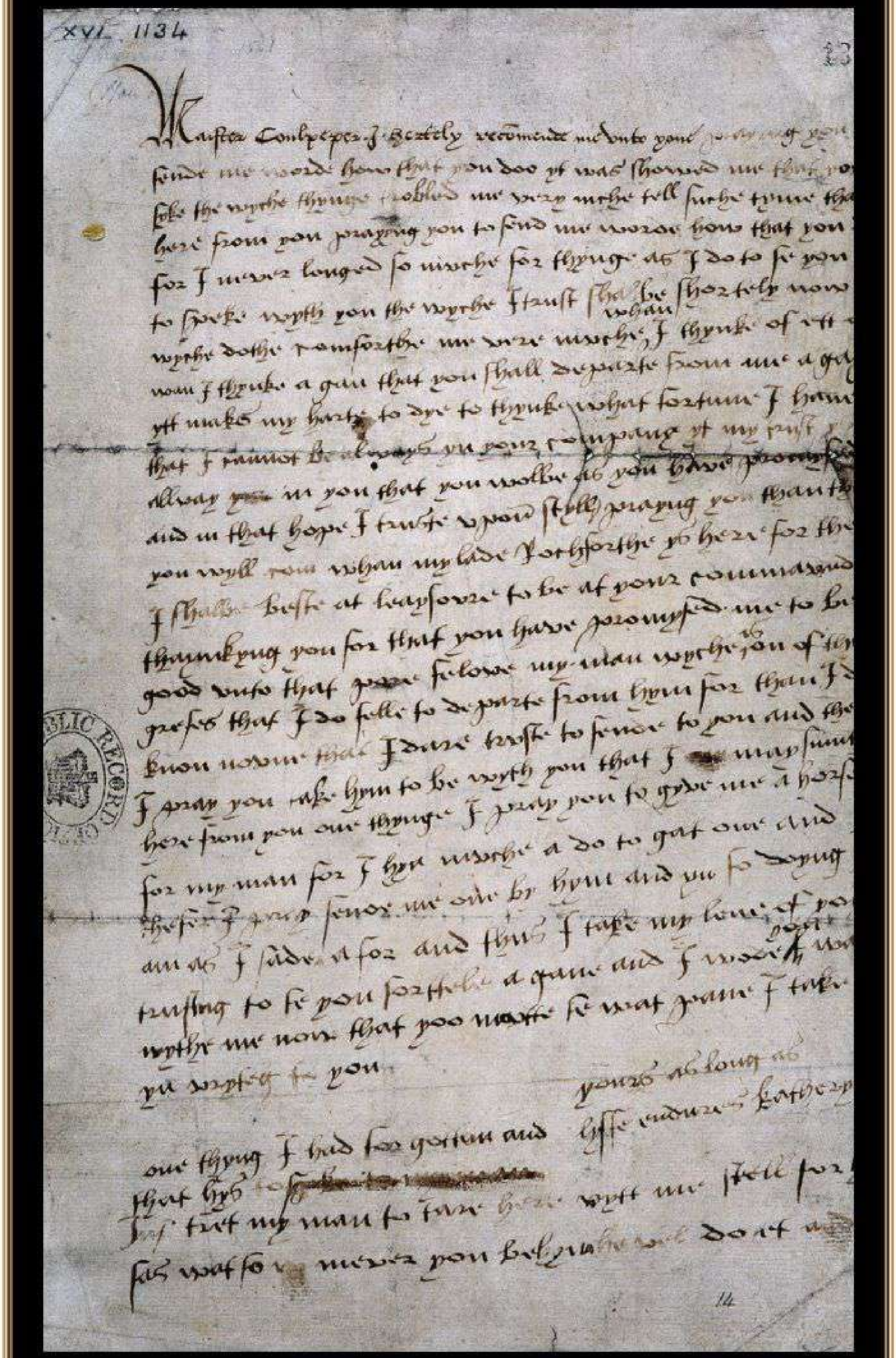
Catherine was beheaded at 7am on Monday 13 February 1542 at the Tower of London. It took just one stroke of the axe to kill her

A changing reputation

It's only recently that historians have begun to focus more on the possibility that Catherine was a victim of child abuse, rather than whether or not she was unfaithful

Not surprisingly, Tudor chroniclers treated Catherine Howard with a great deal of contempt and even into the 20th century, respectable historians continued to paint her with the same bristly brush. In his 1961 book *A Tudor Tragedy*, Lacey Baldwin Smith described Catherine as "promiscuous" and a "juvenile delinquent", while in 1991, Alison Weir wrote that she was an "empty-headed wanton". However, not all interpretations have been as harsh.

Lucy Worsley, chief curator at Historic Royal Palaces, is one of her most passionate defenders. She argues that: "It's all very well to describe her 'easy charm', and her 'abundant store of good nature', but it is questionable to do so about a girl who, from the age of 11 or 12 onwards, had older men coming into her bedroom." Worsley camps alongside those who believe the letter to Culpeper was written in fear: "This isn't a sexual predator, but a naïve young woman eager to please, and that's the most pitiful thing of all. She may have been young, and foolish, but it is intolerably unfair that her lasting reputation should be as a silly little slut." Whether the affair with Culpeper happened or not we may never know, but in a modern context, this part of the story has become almost irrelevant.



Early historians were convinced that this letter addressed to Culpeper was written in the queen's own hand, but some now debate whether it was in fact a forgery

On 2 November – All Souls' Day – Cranmer slipped Henry a note during Mass, revealing that "one Francis Dereham had lain in bed with [Catherine] an hundred nights" and that "one Mannock, a servant, knew a privy mark on her body".

At first, the king refused to believe it, and ordered that the Lascelles, Dereham and Mannox all be interrogated. Dereham confessed to having had a sexual relationship with the queen but insisted that there had been a pre-contract of marriage. Were he telling the truth, Henry's marriage to Catherine would have been bigamous, and he could easily have had it annulled. But when Catherine was interrogated by Cranmer, she refused to acknowledge any such arrangement. Initially, she denied the relationship completely, but eventually admitted to having lain with him "diverse times". Had she not denied the contract, her life may well have been saved.

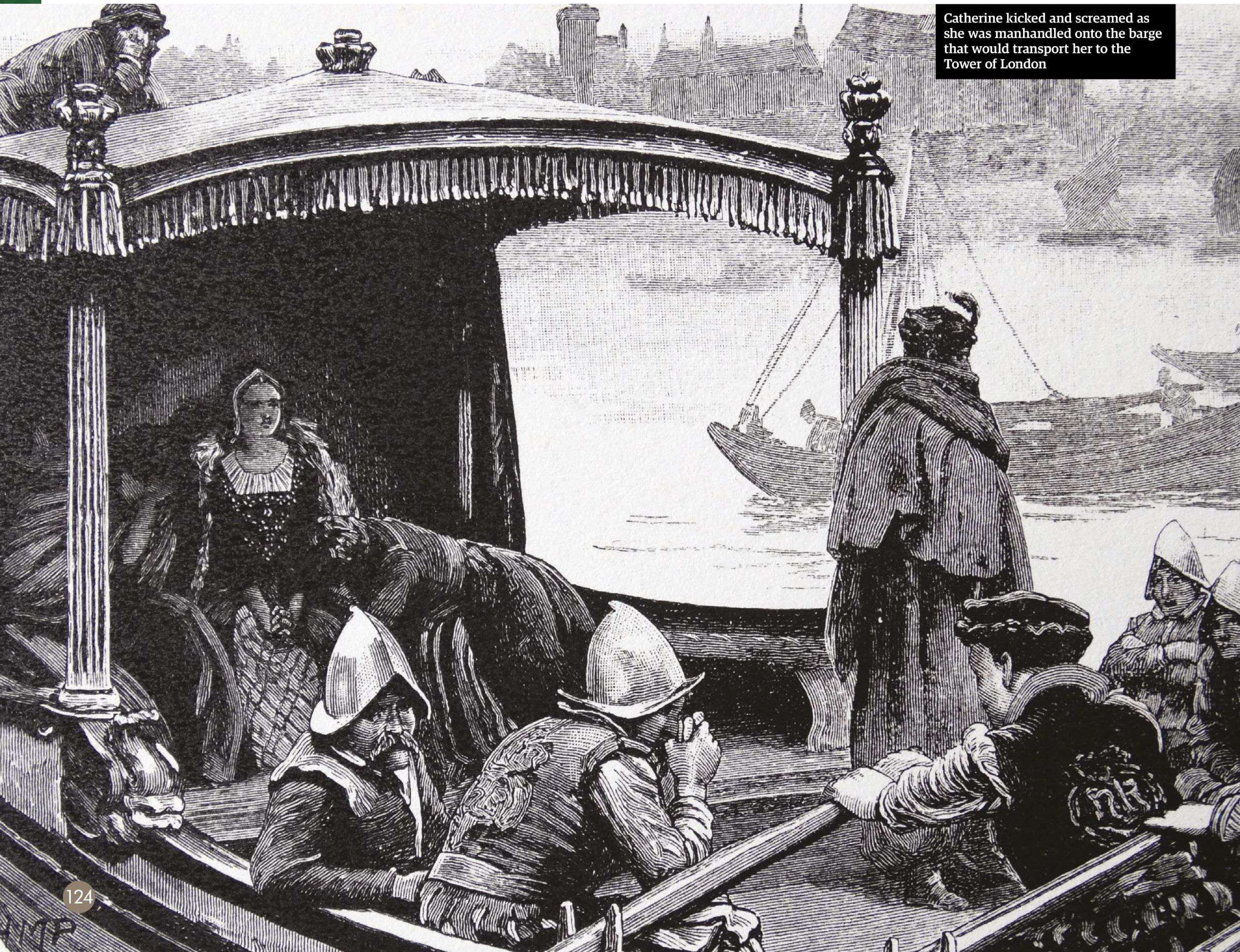
When Henry received her written confession, he called for a sword so that he could kill her himself. Thankfully for Catherine, he had a change of heart, but chose to leave the palace that night. It is said that the hysterical queen ran down the corridor after him begging for mercy and had to be dragged back to her bedchamber by her guards. It was the last time she would ever see him.

"Had she not denied the contract, her life may well have been saved"

Arrangements were made for her to be moved to the dissolved Abbey of Syon until a decision had been reached about what to do next. Meanwhile, Dereham was interrogated once more and – possibly under torture – admitted that he had been replaced in Catherine's affections by Thomas Culpeper. Culpeper's room was searched and the letter discovered.

On 11 November, Culpeper was arrested and questioned. He confessed that he and the queen had had several meetings and that she had sent him many gifts. Catherine also admitted this but she also insisted that it was Culpeper who had done the chasing, and that she had asked Lady Rochford "bid him desire no more to trouble me or send to me". While she was undoubtedly fond of Culpeper, who she called a "little sweet fool", she obstinately claimed that her affection went no further. She had instructed him to only come when Rochford was with her – the presence of a chaperone ensuring that propriety was being observed. As for whether Culpeper had lain with her, she "denied [it] upon her oath, or touching any bare of her but her hand".

But the archbishop and the rest of the king's council had already made up their minds. On 10 December, Culpeper and Dereham were executed



Catherine kicked and screamed as she was manhandled onto the barge that would transport her to the Tower of London

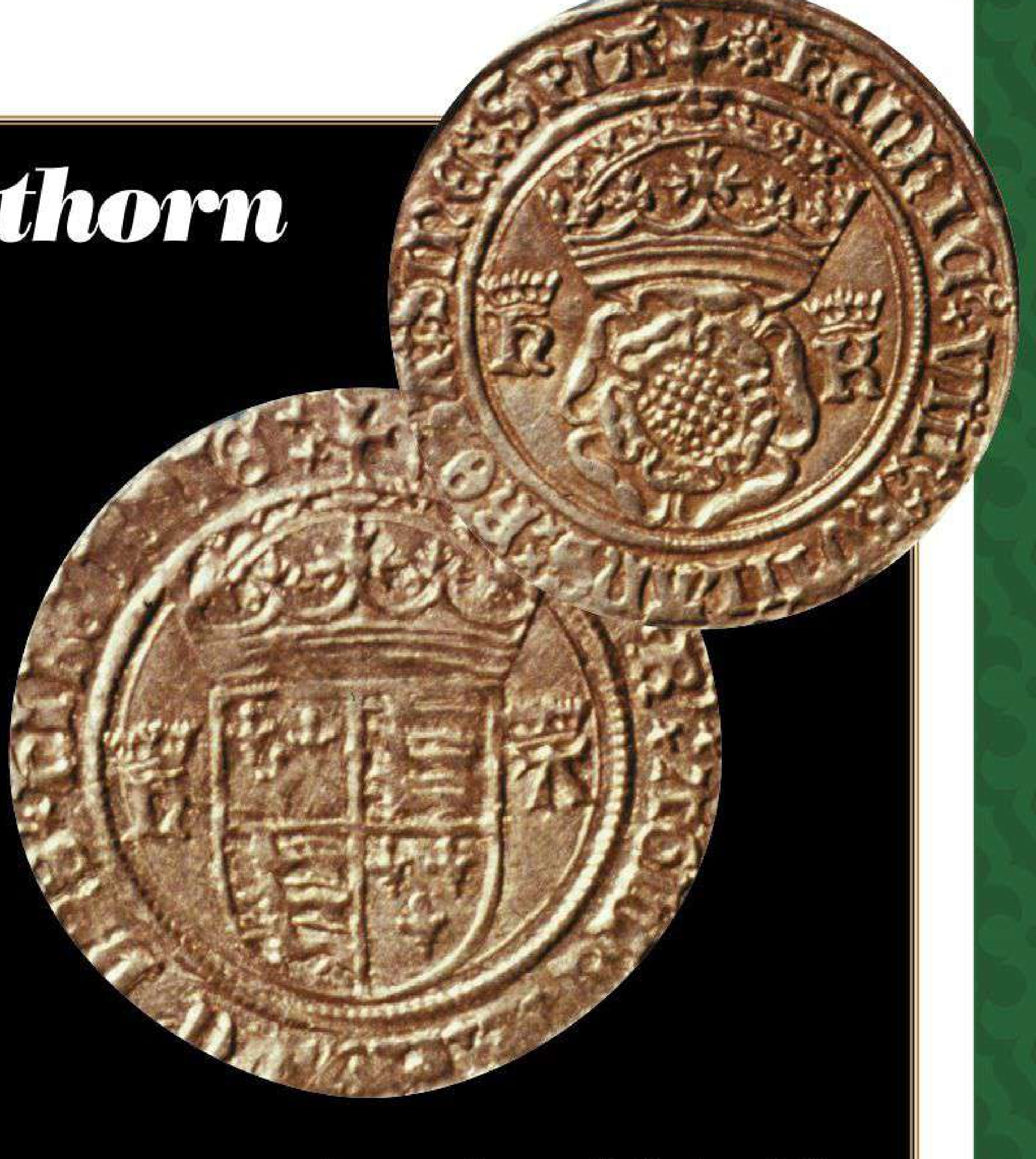
"Catherine was forced to stare at the rotting faces of Dereham and Culpeper"

A rose without a thorn

Was Henry VIII really so poetic in the descriptions of his wife?

It is said that Henry described her as the "very jewel of womanhood" and, most famously, a "rose without a thorn". The king was besotted with Catherine – young, beautiful and lively – right from the beginning. Even when the accusations were made against her, Henry initially refused to believe them, suggesting that even the absence of a child had done little to dent his affections. But did he really call her a rose without a thorn, or, like so many famous words from history, is this just another myth?

The first author known to attribute this to Henry's queen is Agnes Strickland, a Victorian historian. She writes: "He could neither afford to honour Katherine Howard with a public bridal nor a coronation, but he paid her the compliment of causing gold coins to be struck in commemoration of their marriage… with the following legend: "HENRICUS VIII. RUTILANS ROSA SINE SPINA." In fact, the 'Crown of the Rose' coin was struck in 1526, when Henry was still married to Catherine of Aragon. The "dazzling rose without a thorn" was actually referring to the king himself.



A crowned rose with the inscription "HENRIC VIII RUTILANS ROSA SINE SPINA" can clearly be seen on this gold coin dated 1526

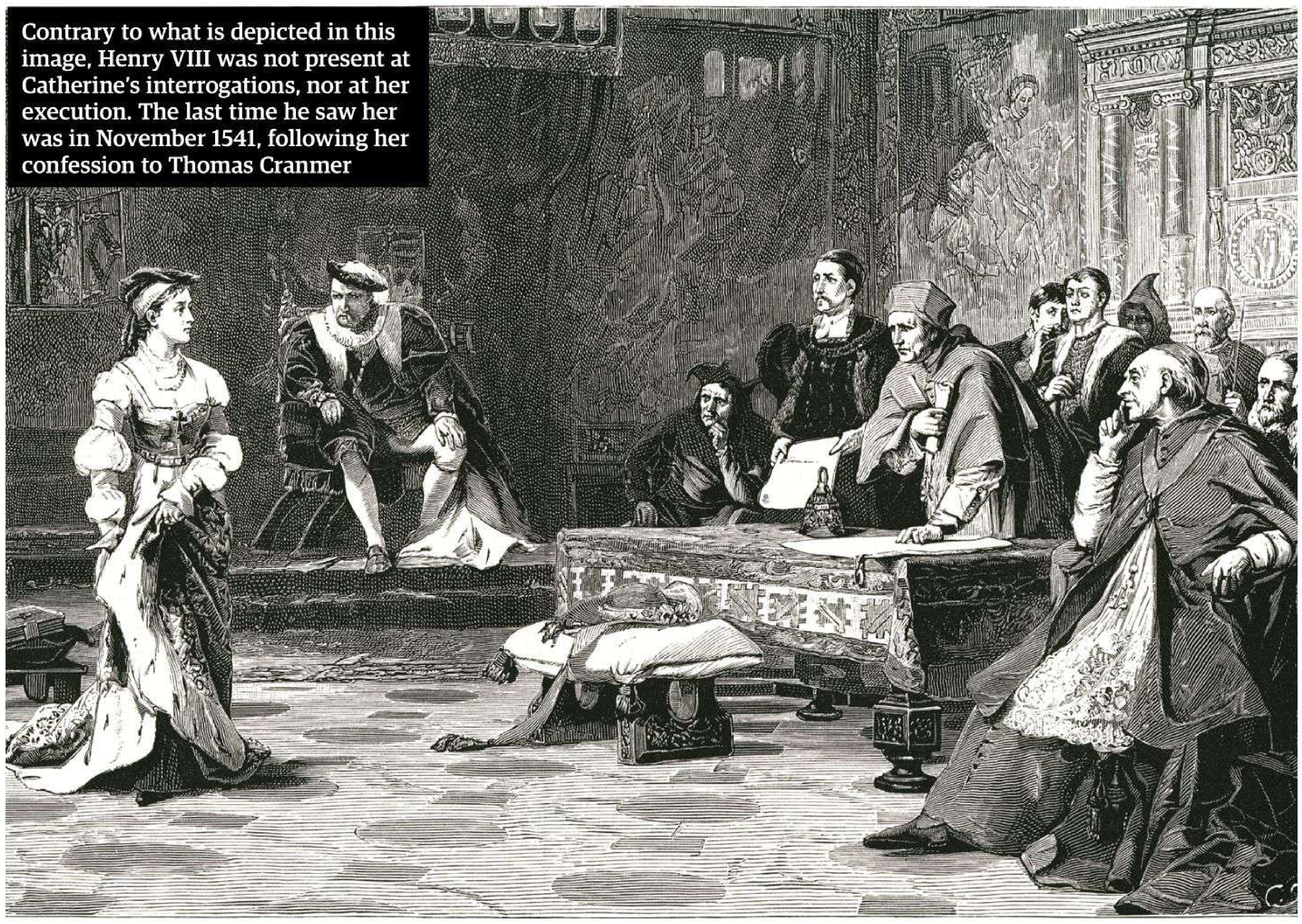
for high treason. Culpeper avoided a traitor's death thanks to his position at court, and was permitted a simple beheading. Dereham received no such mercy. He was hanged until close to death, then castrated and disemboweled while still alive, before eventually being beheaded and quartered. Both of their heads were set on spikes on London Bridge as a gruesome warning to all.

As to what to charge Catherine with, the council was unsure. Technically, she had committed no crime. Of course, in Tudor times, a simple answer could always be found, if not created. On 7 February 1542, the Royal Assent by Commission Act made it treason - punishable by death - for a queen consort to fail to disclose her sexual history to the king, or to incite someone to commit adultery with her. Catherine Howard could finally be found guilty.

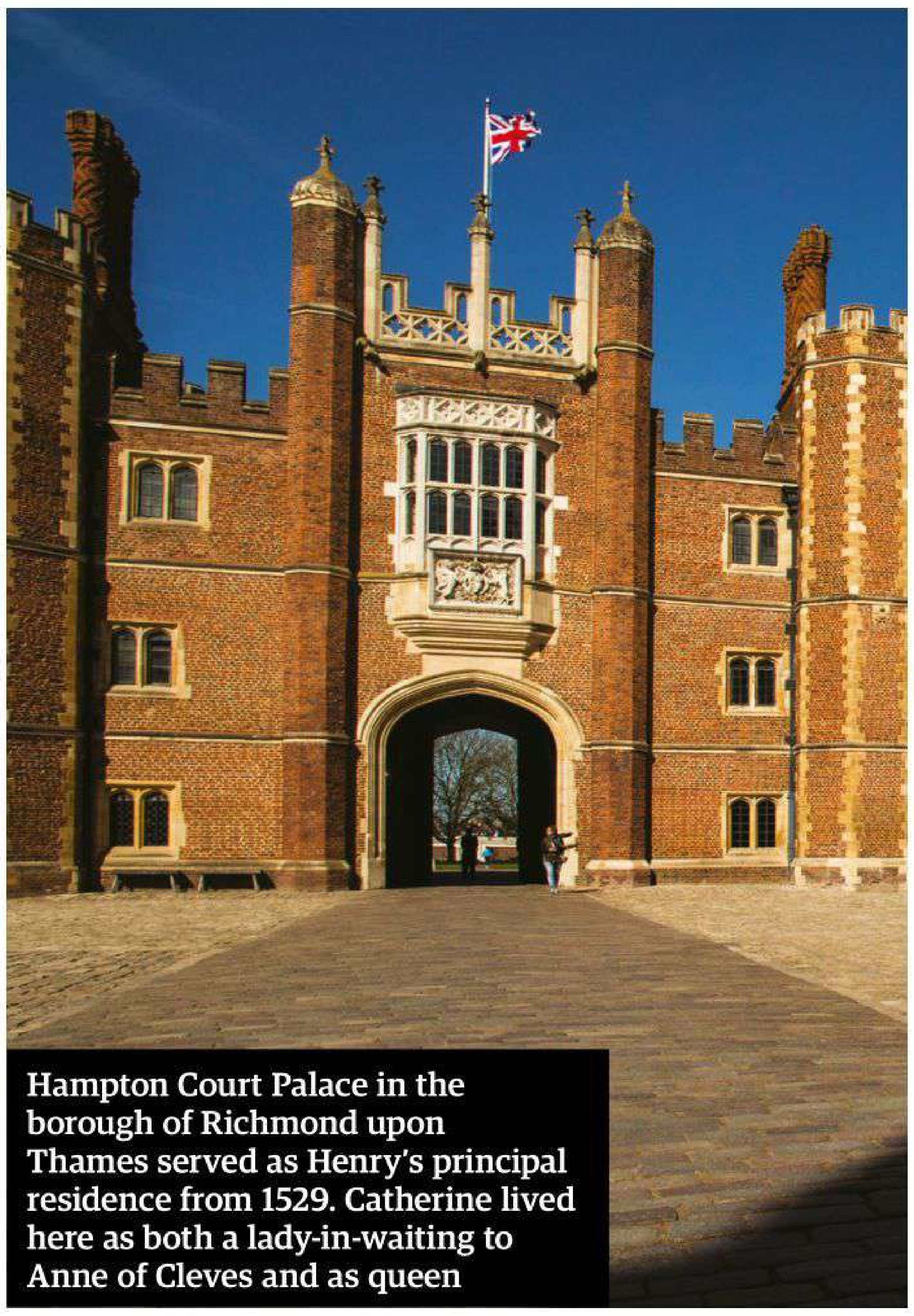
Her screams could be heard all around when the lords of the council came for her and bundled her onto a waiting barge. As the morbid procession passed under London Bridge towards the Tower of London, Catherine was forced to stare at the rotting faces of Dereham and Culpeper, a cold reminder of the fate that she awaited.

Her execution was scheduled for the morning of 13 February. The night before, she asked for the block to be brought to her prison cell so that she could practise placing her head upon it. As dawn broke, Catherine was helped up onto the scaffold. Though pale and terrified, she remained relatively composed as she made her parting speech, describing her punishment as "worthy and just". A much-recited anecdote claimed that her final words were "I die a queen, but I would rather have died the wife of Culpeper," although there are no eyewitness accounts to substantiate this. Her head was detached with a single stroke of the axe. She was probably no more than 20 years old.

Lady Rochford was executed immediately after, and both of their remains were buried in an unmarked grave in the nearby chapel of Saint Peter ad Vincula, where Catherine's cousins Anne and George Boleyn also lay. Catherine's bones have never been found, and a simple plaque on the west wall dedicated to those who died in the Tower is all there is to commemorate her short life.

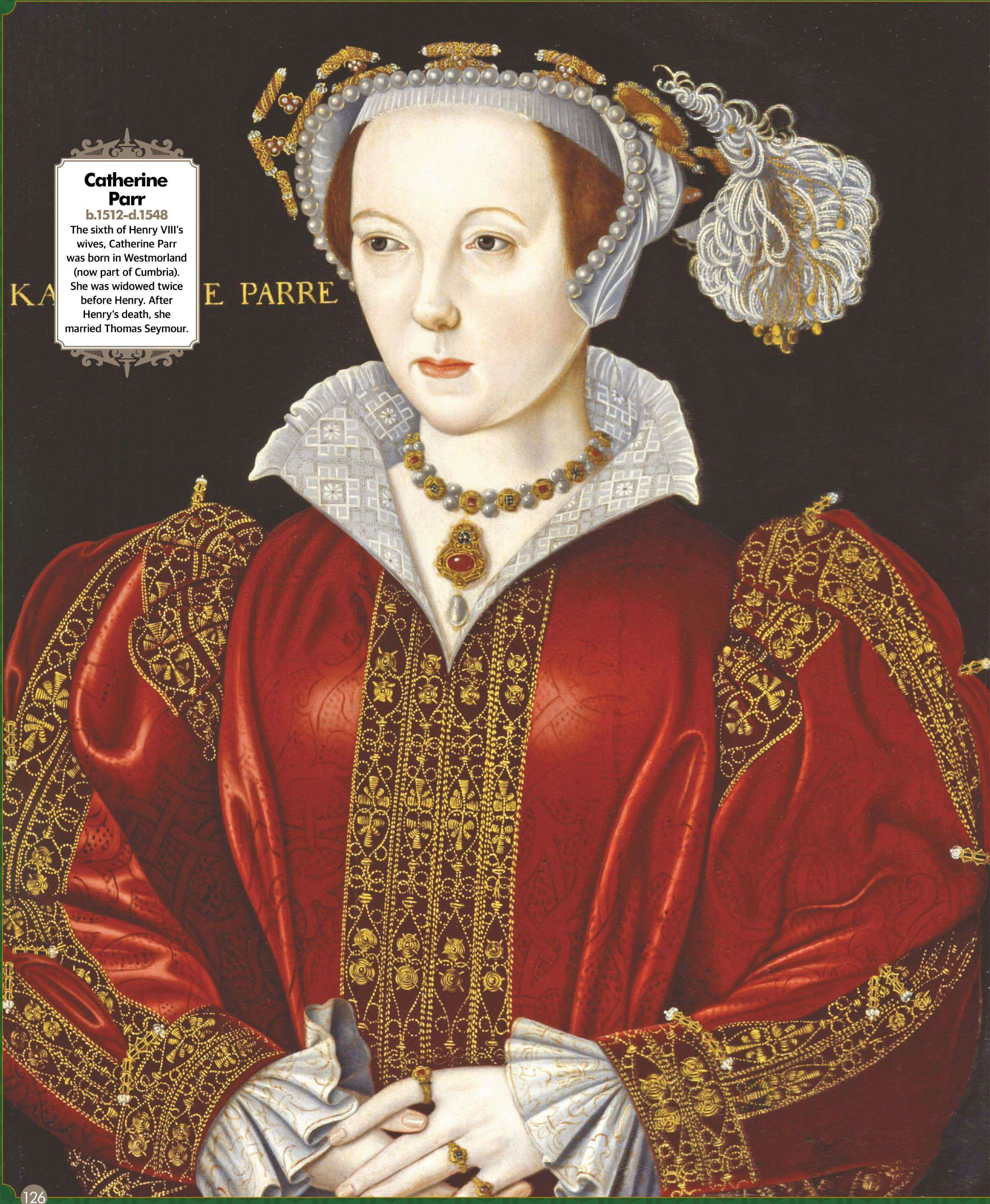


Contrary to what is depicted in this image, Henry VIII was not present at Catherine's interrogations, nor at her execution. The last time he saw her was in November 1541, following her confession to Thomas Cranmer



Hampton Court Palace in the borough of Richmond upon Thames served as Henry's principal residence from 1529. Catherine lived here as both a lady-in-waiting to Anne of Cleves and as queen

© Getty; Alamy; TopFoto; Mary Evans; WIKI



Catherine Parr

b.1512-d.1548

The sixth of Henry VIII's wives, Catherine Parr was born in Westmorland (now part of Cumbria). She was widowed twice before Henry. After Henry's death, she married Thomas Seymour.

Catherine Parr

The wife That lived

Henry VIII's last wife wasn't just lucky to outlive him – she was a shrewd queen who knew how to keep her head

Words WILLOW WINSHAM

The sixth and final wife of Henry VIII is not generally as well known nor as popular as the five who came before her. Often depicted as a matronly nursemaid for Henry's final years, or a devout yet somewhat boring reformer, Catherine Parr has found herself relegated to the sidelines in histories of Henry's reign. Although this unbalance has been redressed in recent years, it is still fair to say she is remembered mostly for the fact that she survived marriage to one of England's most unpredictable and irascible monarchs. What, then, was Catherine's secret? How did she manage to survive marriage to Henry?

The 31-year-old Catherine was no blushing virginal bride when she became Henry's queen. She had been married twice previously, seeing both husbands to the grave before she caught the attention of the king in 1543. Henry was not her only suitor: she was also being pursued by Thomas Seymour, brother to the late Jane Seymour who had provided Henry with his desperately desired son. Although attractive and Catherine's first choice of match, there was no question of Seymour standing in the way of the king, and he stepped aside.

The marriage to Henry was not a foregone conclusion, however. It was not a decision Catherine made lightly and her later account of what happened – though no doubt penned with the benefit of hindsight – reveals her inner struggle as she decided whether to become England's next queen. Not a great deal is known of Henry's courtship of Catherine, nor exactly when he proposed. Their marriage license was issued on 10 July 1543 by Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury, with the marriage ceremony following just two days later. It was not a large, glittering affair; only a select handful of people attended the wedding at Hampton Court as Catherine became Henry's sixth wife.

One thing that set Catherine off on good footing was that, due to the lucky circumstances, the newlyweds had a 'honeymoon' period of about six months, with Catherine in Henry's company throughout that time. By the time they parted due to necessities of state, it was clear Catherine knew how to manage Henry. A great reader of people, she learned quickly what interested her husband and what did not, how to hold his attention, and, crucially, how to ensure the egotistical monarch felt firmly at the centre of affairs. Quite simply, she dedicated herself to being the queen that Henry

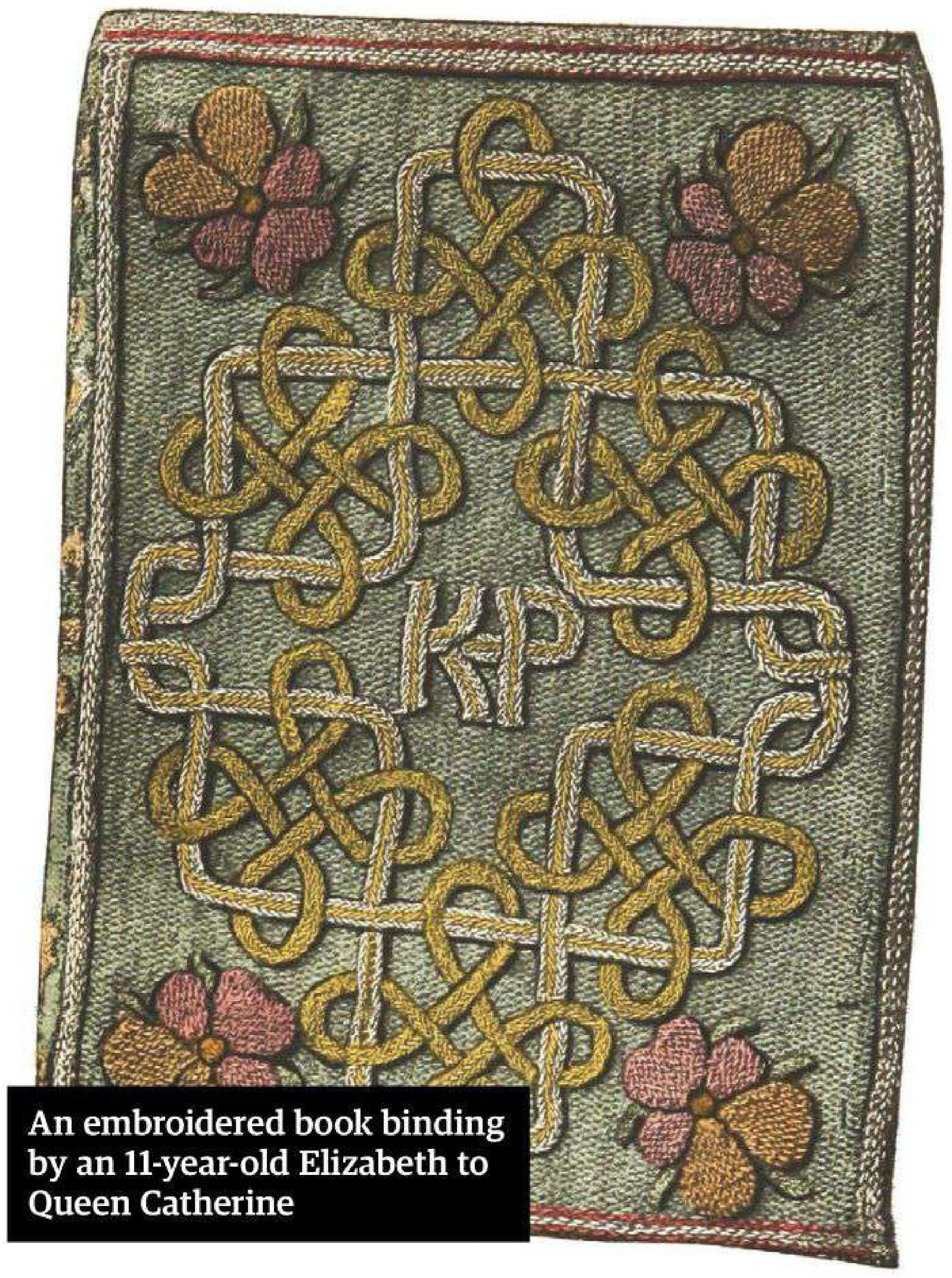
Kendal Castle, the supposed birthplace of Catherine Parr

needed and wanted her to be. This may not have all been pretence. Although there is generally a view that Catherine endured marriage to Henry, from the evidence it is far from beyond the realms of plausibility that she was genuinely fond of her husband and got a great deal of satisfaction from being his wife. From accounts, it is clear that she enjoyed the fine clothes and jewellery that came from marriage with Henry. She also had a passion for hunting, dancing and music – all things that were likewise shared by the king and would have helped endear her to her new husband.

Catherine also recognised the importance of courting the favour of Henry's children. The future Edward VI was only five years old when Catherine caught his father's eye, and Elizabeth was nearly ten at the time of their marriage. Both children had been lacking a mother figure for some time, and Catherine adeptly stepped into the role, keeping up correspondence with the half-siblings and ensuring that she visited when she could. Neither did she neglect Henry's elder daughter, Mary. Catherine approached the often lonely young woman as a friend, and Mary welcomed her company.

The first few years of marriage passed smoothly, and the trust Henry put in his wife was made evident in 1544 when he left her in charge of the country to go to war in France. Although she ruled with a council to assist her, the role of regent was no empty title, and Catherine held a great deal of power. That she was more than up to the task was clear, and Henry was confident his wife would promote his interests and provide the crucial aid necessary to keep his campaign afloat, as he doggedly embarked on the conquering of the long-coveted Boulogne. Catherine was, in total, a role that only one other of Henry's queens, Catherine of Aragon – Catherine's own namesake and possibly godmother – had held. It might seem, then, that Catherine Parr was untouchable, but there were two areas where she was on shaky ground, and they nearly led to her downfall: children and religion.

Catherine's failure to produce a child – any child, much less the second son for Henry that would keep the Tudor line alive – was something of which both she and Henry must have been acutely aware. Although Catherine had not produced children with her first two husbands, this fact does not seem to have stood against her when Henry decided to make her his wife. It is possible the monarch convinced himself that his predecessors were simply too old or inept to perform the task required of them. He, of course, could. When, after several years of marriage, it became glaringly apparent this was not the case, it is likely the king's famous conscience, which had led him to ruthlessly set aside his first wife and break with Rome, felt a prickle. Indeed, in February 1546, the imperial ambassador reported to his master that rumours had surfaced that would no doubt have made Catherine's blood run cold: Henry was again looking for a new queen, the current one to be replaced due to her inability to provide the child that was not only her privilege



An embroidered book binding by an 11-year-old Elizabeth to Queen Catherine but her duty. Although the report also stressed that Henry's behaviour towards his wife had not outwardly altered, this was not, as others had found to their cost, necessarily a sign that all was well, and Catherine was understandably unhappy.

The matter that caused the most friction, as Catherine discovered to her cost, was that of religion. With an interest in scripture and religious discussion instilled within her by her upbringing, in the first years of her marriage to Henry, Catherine's religious views saw a steady development. She devoted increasing time to exploring the word of God and the battle between reform and tradition that was taking place in her husband's lands, developing her own reform-oriented ideas. Although not the zealous Protestant she is so often painted to be, Catherine had a keen interest in the betterment of the English church, and many of those within her household likewise supported reform to a greater or lesser extent. Among other things, Catherine was a vociferous supporter of church services taking place in English, believing that people should have direct access to God through the reading and understanding of his word. She was not slow to discuss these ideas with her husband, and their religious debates were well known.

As an extension of this, and encouraged by the books she read and those around her, Catherine embarked upon her own literary works. Skilled at collecting the works of others, she edited and published several projects, one of the most well known being a translation of *Paraphrases of the New Testament* by the famed scholar Erasmus. Her *Prayers and Meditations* was the first book of its kind to be produced by a queen of England, and at the end of 1545, Catherine had already began a work that would not be published until after Henry's death – *Lamentation of a Sinner* was remarkable for being the first work of that nature by an English woman.

Although Henry seems to have tolerated and even enjoyed his wife's foray into the world of religious opinion, there was a line that the relatively conservative monarch was not willing to cross. When a misjudged New Year's gift from Catherine's step-daughter Elizabeth to her father proved to be none other than a translation of the queen's own work, it may have been something of a rude awakening for the king. Although he had no doubt been aware of his wife's dabbling in religious writing, being faced with her promotion of ideas that were verging further than his own – Henry was growing increasingly unhappy with the spread of religious texts in English, fearing that the common people especially would abuse this – was another matter entirely.

The famous account of what followed presents Catherine as far from shy to venture opinions when it came to religion, encouraging debate, and generally using her husband as a sounding board for her growing ideas on religion and reform. From Catherine's perspective, this was a two-way affair, with Henry getting as much satisfaction from their talks as she did, but, unknown to the queen, Henry had had enough.

The king bided his time for a while, and the oblivious Catherine continued in ignorance until, one day during a conversation, Henry abruptly changed the subject. Although surprised, this warning signal does not seem to have been heeded: none the wiser, Catherine left her husband that day thinking all was well, the wily monarch having kept up the act of attentive and loving husband until the door was closed behind her. Once Catherine was out of earshot, however, Henry vented his feelings. Making his displeasure at the situation known to Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, he lamented that it was a sorry day when a wife dared to teach her husband.

No friend of the queen, this was the sign that Gardiner had been waiting for. Feigning reluctance, he carefully intimated that much of what Henry's dear queen ventured in the name of religion could equally be labelled as heretical sedition; he would not speak further, however, without the king's express permission, nor without reassurance that the king would support and protect him, as what he was about to say could land him in grave trouble. But, with Henry's say-so, he could prove the queen was working in league with others who were plotting sedition, and a threat to the religious stability of the realm.

The many husbands of Catherine Parr

Married four times in total, Catherine holds the record for the most married of England's queens

1. Edward Borough

Date of marriage: 1529
Date of death: 1533

Knighted by Henry VIII and a justice of the peace in their Lincolnshire home of Kirton-in-Lindsey, Borough died after just four years of marriage, leaving Catherine a widow at the young age of 20.

2. John Neville, Lord Latimer

Date of marriage: 1534
Date of death: 1543

Latimer was caught up in the Pilgrimage of Grace when he was forced to speak for the rebels against the government. Latimer escaped their fate, and Catherine seems to have felt affection towards him.

3. King Henry VIII

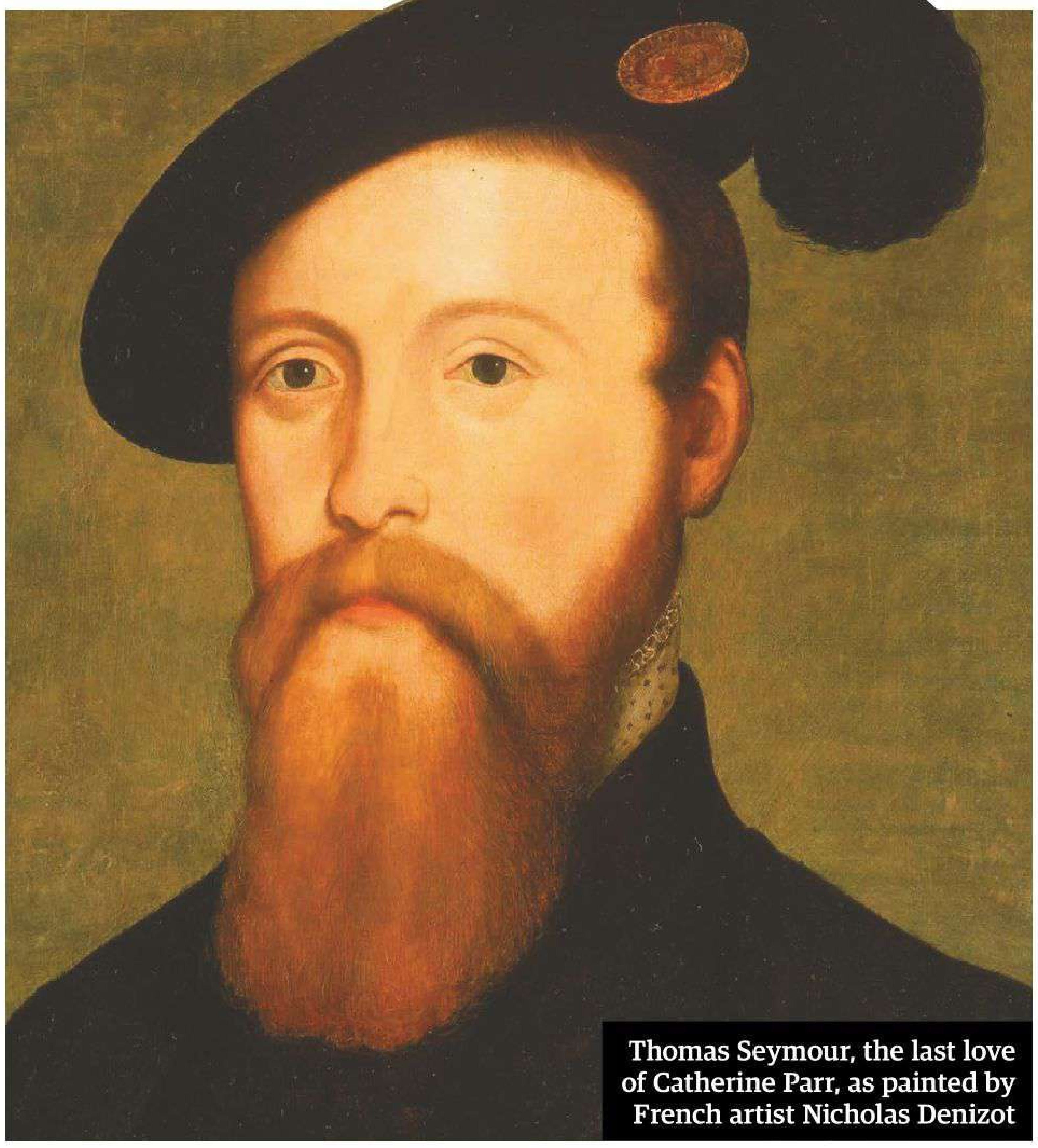
Date of marriage: 1543
Date of death: 1547

Catherine's best known marriage, it could be argued it was also her most successful. With much in common and fond of each other, the two weathered the storms about them, her position bringing with it many advantages.

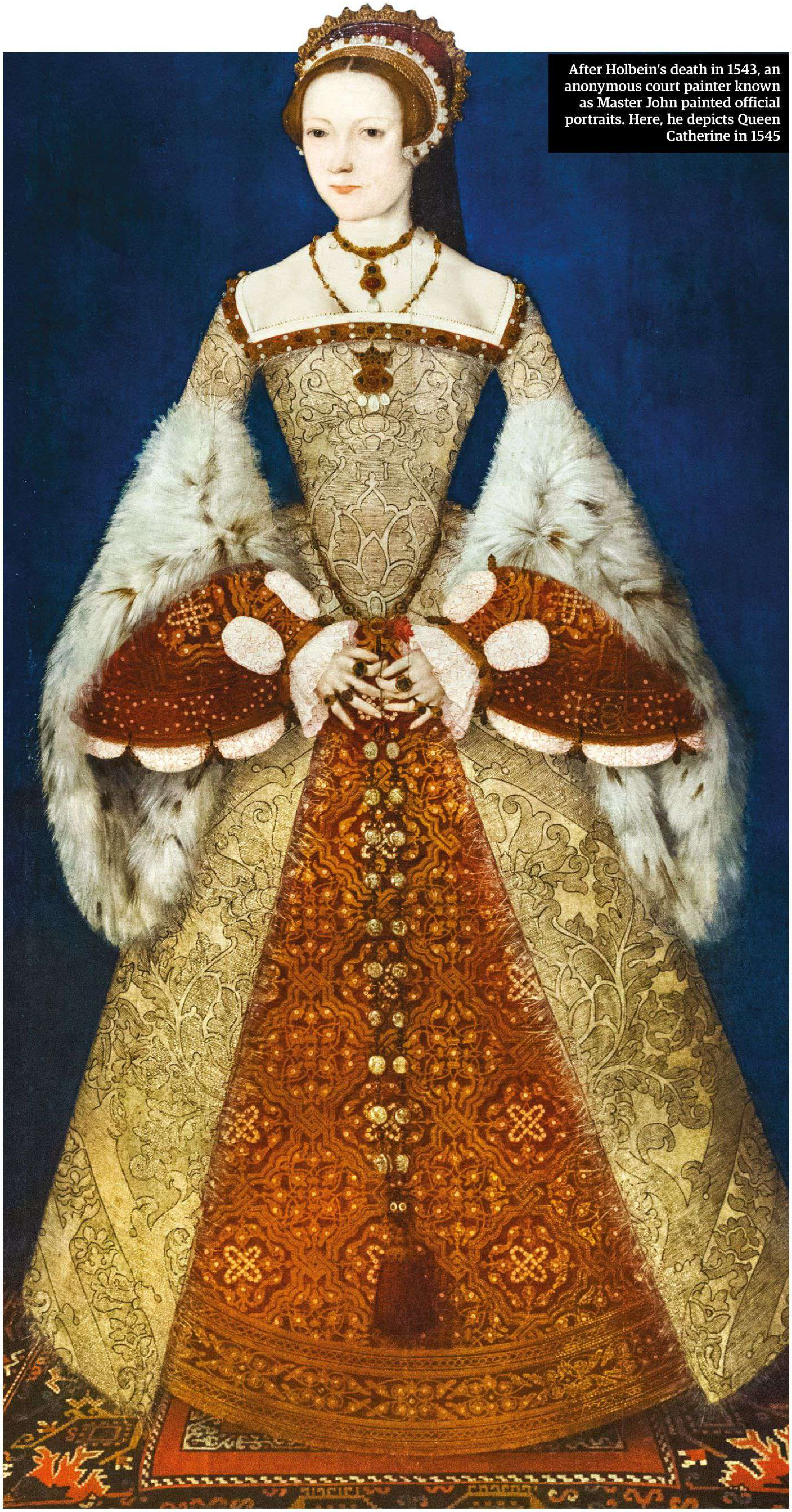
4. Thomas Seymour

Date of marriage: 1547

Although known as the love of her life, Catherine's marriage to Seymour was turbulent, tarnished by tales of impropriety between Thomas and Catherine's step-daughter, the future Elizabeth I. Although reconciled, the marriage ended in tragedy, Catherine dying after giving birth in 1548.



Thomas Seymour, the last love of Catherine Parr, as painted by French artist Nicholas Denizot



After Holbein's death in 1543, an anonymous court painter known as Master John painted official portraits. Here, he depicts Queen Catherine in 1545

It seems Henry agreed to this, the suspicious king always on the look out for any whiff of plot and treason. Even as the king continued to outwardly dote upon his wife, Gardiner set things in motion to act against Catherine, gathering information and evidence that would bring down the woman he saw as advocating radical religious reform and with too much sway over the king. A plot was hatched, wherein several of Catherine's ladies would be arrested, their belongings searched, and, when incriminating evidence was no doubt found, the queen would in turn find herself apprehended. When found guilty, she would be taken to the Tower of London to await the same fate that had befallen two of Henry's previous queens.

Indeed, for Anne Boleyn and Catherine's immediate predecessor, the young, flighty Catherine Howard, plummeting in Henry's esteem had spelled the end. Catherine's fate was to be very different. Perhaps it was due to a change of heart in the ailing king, or perhaps he had truly never meant for matters to go so far over what was really just an irritation such as occurred in any marriage, however happy. It might have even been part of a convoluted mind game all along, with Henry playing one side against the other in order to keep the ultimate prize: control. Whatever the cause, news of the plot against Catherine was revealed by Henry himself to one of his doctors. This in itself would not have likely saved the queen, but more was yet to come. The paper containing the charges to be made against Catherine, signed by the king, was "accidentally" dropped. Duly discovered, the document was taken to Catherine to warn her of what lay ahead unless she acted, and acted quickly.

It was an event that would shatter Catherine's usual calm and poise; understandably the queen was greatly unsettled by the news, her response one of terror and hysteria. She was right to be frightened; her enemies were after her blood and Henry had, it seemed, risen to take the bait. So terrified was she that she was physically ill: comfort came then in the form of the very doctor to whom Henry had first confided his plan, the man offering her the way out of her perilous position. All Catherine had to do was to submit herself wholly to the king's good judgement, leaving him in no doubt as to her submission. If she could convince her husband that she was his to command, Henry would, the doctor insisted, be quick to revert to his previously good opinion of her and all would be well.

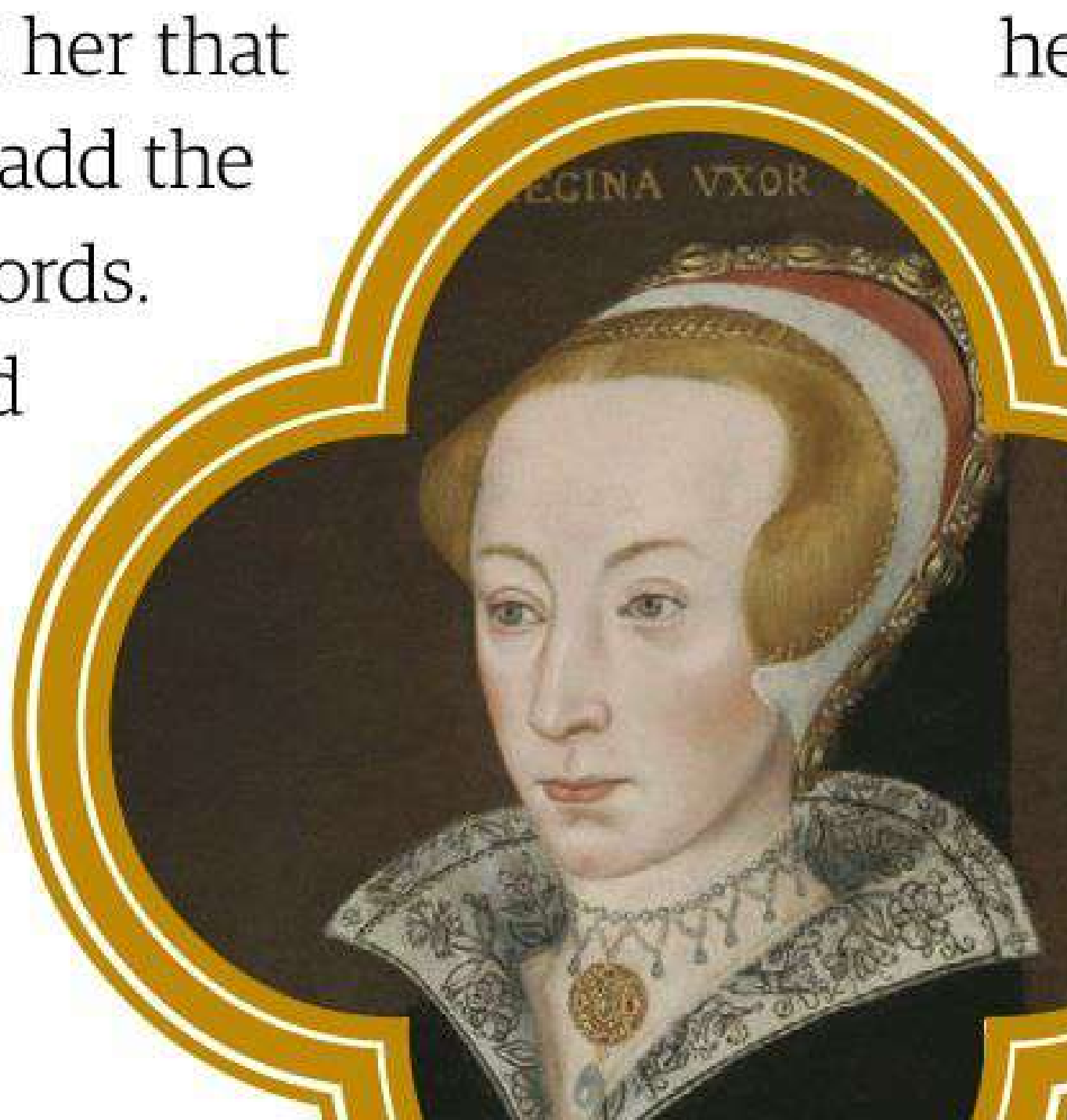
Luck was on Catherine's side, as the chance to set the process in motion presented itself when Henry himself came to visit her, having heard she was ill. Still fearful, Catherine's distress at having upset her husband was clear; it had not been her

ABOVE In 1543 Catherine was married to Henry VIII in a small ceremony at Hampton Court Palace

BELOW Catherine survived her marriage to Henry

> “Catherine kept her head and played it calm, hiding her terror”

intention, and she would never knowingly cause his displeasure. Henry reassured her that all was well, staying with her to add the comfort of his presence to his words.



This apparent reprieve spurred Catherine into action, and she wasted no time in making sure that any books she or her ladies owned that might be incriminating were removed. Then, if the story is to be believed, Catherine made perhaps the boldest move of her life: she went to Henry's rooms to re-establish her position once and for all. He had several gentlemen accompanying him, but this did not deter the determined Catherine. When Henry drew talk to the matter of religion and asked for his wife's opinion, with everything depending upon her response, Catherine kept her head and played it calm, hiding her terror behind the poise she had cultivated for so long. She could not venture an answer, Catherine told her husband, being only an inferior, unskilled woman who, by dint of her sex, lacked the wisdom afforded to men. She would, instead, bow to Henry's own opinion on the matter. At that, Henry pushed the point, referring to their previous discussions, leaving her in no doubt that he saw her lecturing as beyond what was to be tolerated by him from a wife. Catherine told him again she had meant no offence, and none of what she had said should be taken with anything approaching seriousness. Far from wanting to instruct and influence her husband in any matter, much less religion, she had simply been trying to distract him from the pain she knew he suffered in his leg, hoping to help him pass the time during which he was in discomfort. Furthermore, she had secretly hoped that by drawing the king to discuss religion, she might, herself, learn much, increasing her own education.

Henry was all too ready to accept this earnest explanation and apology, and he declared himself both relieved and satisfied to learn that his spouse was, after all, the paragon of wifely submission he had first thought, and that he would have no need for the arrest warrant that drawn up in her name. Before they parted, she was sitting on his knee and words of affection were exchanged between the couple, Catherine's position, once more, safe and secure.

The postscript to this affair publicly consolidated Catherine's position and was a warning to anyone who might think to try to move against her. Catherine was spending time with Henry in the gardens when the chancellor, one of the prime movers against her along with Gardiner, arrived with 40 armed men to arrest the queen. Initially triumphant, he found, to his horror, that the rules had changed without anyone telling him. Instead of welcoming him, Henry responded with indignant outrage, loudly and brutally berating the man who thought he was doing his king's bidding and sending him away confused and no doubt worrying about his own prospects.

There is likelihood that the account handed down, written after all the main players in the saga, including Catherine were dead, was greatly embellished, written as it was by one who made no effort to hide the fact he was well and truly on Catherine's side. But one thing is certain; Catherine had faced and survived a situation that might well have led her to the block.

Without a doubt there was a concerted move against those advocating further reform: in 1546 a well-born young woman named Anne Askew was arrested, questioned and tortured in an attempt to get her to incriminate those who also shared her views. It is very possible that Catherine was one of the intended targets and that she was aware of the danger she might be in from the enemies of reform; she had made sure that her rooms and chests had new locks on them around the start of the unrest. Although Catherine escaped, Askew refused the many opportunities offered to take back her words, and went to the stake on 26 July.

Henry died in January 1547, and although she must have grieved for her husband, Catherine was now free to follow her own desires, a rare survivor of Henry's volatile affections. Indeed, it might be argued that Catherine was saved, ultimately, because of a simple fact so often overlooked: Henry loved and admired the woman he had chosen as his sixth and final queen, and she him.

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Henry's succession

Throughout Henry VIII's reign, the thorny issue of the succession had dominated Tudor politics. In the wake of his death, much remained unsettled

Words JON WRIGHT

Henry VIII died in the early hours of 28 January 1547. He was 55 years old – a respectable, but far from exceptional, innings for a high-born Englishman during the 16th century. As a younger man, Henry had been celebrated for his vim and sporting prowess, suffering only minor bouts of illness: a case of smallpox in 1513, for example, and encounters with malarial fever in 1521 and 1528. Henry's passion for jousting had occasionally resulted in serious accidents. A contest with his great friend Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, in 1524 produced some severe bruises and, in January 1536, the king had been rendered unconscious for two hours following a joust at Greenwich. It was perhaps there that the great decline in his health began. Henry had shown signs of ulceration on his legs from the late 1520s. The cause may have been varicose veins or, more likely, osteomyelitis – a chronic, septic infection of the bones. The symptoms, which became increasingly debilitating after 1537, included spells of fever, and when the ulcers closed up and pus could not escape, tortuous pain ensued. Henry would suffer repeated periods of incapacitation: notably for two weeks in May 1538, in February 1541, and again in March 1544.

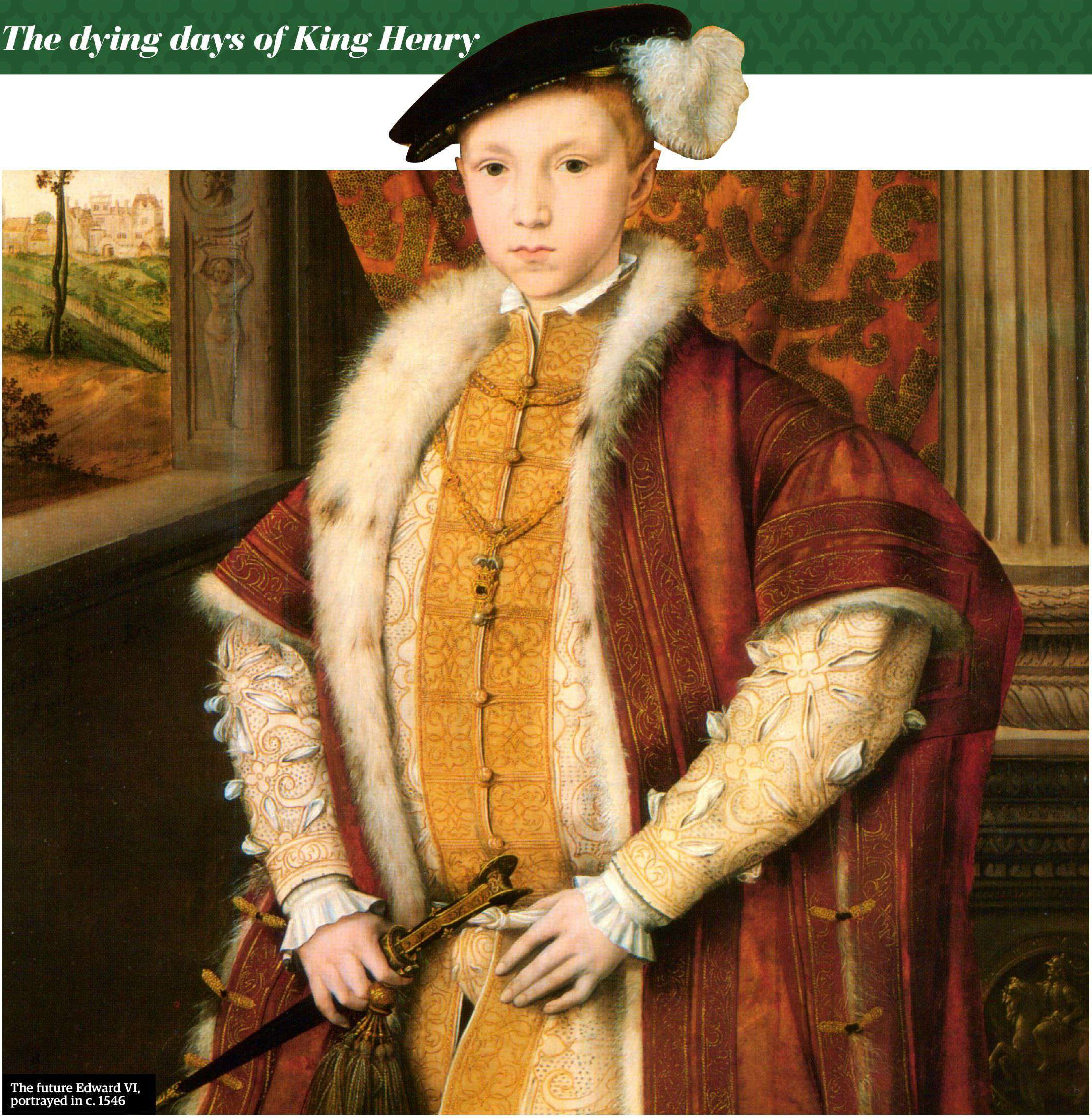
Henry exacerbated his condition by indulging his passion for horse riding but, for the most part, his athletic days lay behind him. He became obese and, by the mid-1540s, it was necessary to move him around his royal palaces in sedan chairs. Gout and constipation added to the monarch's medical woes. The physician Andrew Boorde visited Henry in 1542 and, while encouraged by the monarch's steady pulse and good digestion, was alarmed by his girth. At the most extreme, Henry would boast a chest measurement of 57 inches, and his waist reached an impressive 54 inches. Henry's final illness over the winter of 1546-7 can have taken no one by surprise. His medical expenses had completely soared from £4 17s 6d in August 1546 to more than £25 by December.

Reports of how coherent Henry was in his final hours are somewhat mixed. By one account, "he confessed and took the holy sacrament and commended his soul to God." Another describes the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, urging the king to make some sign of his faith and Henry, "holding him with his hand, did wring his hand in his as hard as he could." News of Henry's passing was kept secret for three days, perhaps because his ministers hoped to find the time to despatch the duke of Norfolk, under accusation of treason. As things turned out, Henry's death saved Norfolk from the scaffold. Among the first to be informed of the king's passing were two of his children, Edward and Elizabeth, both residing at Enfield Manor in Kent. In the wake of his father's death, Edward expressed profound grief but was consoled, as he put it, by the fact that Henry was "now in heaven and that he hath gone out

> "Henry's final illness over the winter can have taken no one by suprise. His medical expenses had soared"

DIEV ET MON DROIT

Henry surrounded by his family in an image from c.1545, shortly after the order of succession had been confirmed



The future Edward VI, portrayed in c. 1546

of this miserable world into happy and everlasting blessedness."

A round of religious observances followed the king's death, and they reflected many aspects of the Roman Catholicism that had come under siege during Henry's reign. The monarch lay in state on a structure bearing golden images of the saints. A series of masses were led by bishops dressed in white (symbolising the Virgin Mary), then blue (representing the Trinity) and black (for the requiem). The rest of the nation contributed to the mourning. On 8 February, dirges and the tolling of bells was ordered in every parish. A journey to Windsor came next. A procession headed out from London, comprised of choristers, dignitaries and 250 beadsmen praying for the dead king's soul. After a night spent at Syon Abbey, a funeral took place on 16 February in St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, and Henry was interred alongside Jane Seymour, the wife, by all accounts, whom he had loved the most.

The succession

The most pressing issue facing the Tudor regime was the succession. By 1547, this question had largely been resolved, and Edward VI swiftly acceded to the throne without challenge. But behind this smooth transfer of power lay a long and winding dynastic story that had profoundly influenced the relationship between Henry and his children. In common with every early-modern monarch, Henry VIII had hoped to sire a son as soon as possible. In January 1511, just two years after coming to the throne, Henry rejoiced at the arrival of a male heir. Free wine was doled out to the citizenry of London; elaborate ceremonies and chivalric tournaments were mounted. Sadly, by 22 February, the child was dead. In the years to come, Catherine of Aragon would endure multiple miscarriages and, in late 1514, she delivered a still-born son.

Happier news arrived on 18 February 1516, when a daughter, Mary, was born at Greenwich Palace. The birth of a daughter was hardly disastrous. The child

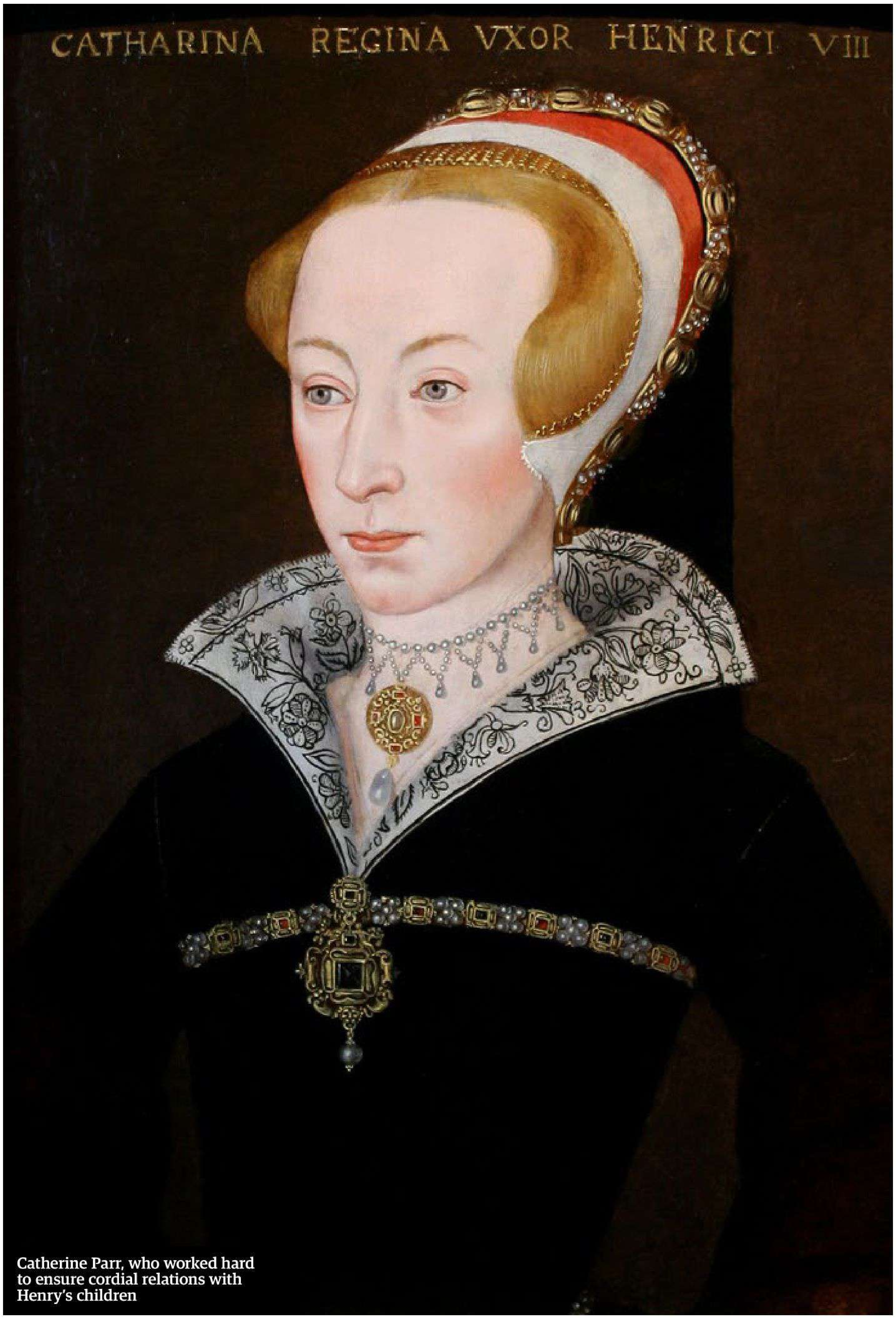
> "In common with every early-modern monarch, Henry VIII had hoped to sire a son"

was healthy, proving that Catherine could carry a robust child to term and, after all, Mary might become a welcome commodity on the complex royal marriage market of the early 16th century. Much attention was lavished on Mary during her youth. As much as 18 per cent of royal expenditure was dedicated to the upkeep of her household. She was provided with a comprehensive education, excelling in languages and music, and was routinely shown off to visiting ambassadors.

Henry VIII did, however, relish his extra-marital liaisons, and one of these, with Elizabeth Blount, produced a son, Henry Fitzroy, in 1519. The king acknowledged Fitzroy as his child without any great hesitation, and honorific titles were showered upon him. He was elevated to the joint dukedom of Richmond and Surrey in 1525, in which year he was also appointed as lord admiral of England. Headship of the council of the North followed and, well into the 1530s, the plumb positions, including wardenship of the Cinque ports and the lord lieutenancy of Ireland, continued to flow. By 1533, Fitzroy had secured a very respectable marriage to Mary Howard, daughter of the duke of Norfolk.

Naming Fitzroy as heir was a possibility (and not without precedent), but this had been definitively ruled out by the mid-1530s, and in 1536, Fitzroy died. Henry appears to have been fond of his bastard son – as demonstrated by an extensive correspondence – but Fitzroy's funeral was a conspicuously low-key affair. Hopes for a male heir born within wedlock had never been abandoned.

In 1519, Henry had engaged the services of Spanish doctors to examine Catherine of Aragon and assess the likelihood of her bearing more children (she was 34 at the time): a sure sign of the monarch's concerns. Anne Boleyn's arrival on the scene naturally presented fresh parental possibilities. Anne's marriage to Henry in January 1533 was swiftly followed by the birth of a daughter, Elizabeth, in September. Historians sometimes write of Henry's deep disappointment at the birth of another female heir, but there is little to support this assumption. There was every chance that Anne Boleyn would go on to produce a male child. Unfortunately, only miscarriages ensued, and the last of these, in January 1536, went some way towards precipitating Anne's fall. Henry may have convinced himself that failure to produce a son was a sign of divine displeasure at the union.


CATHARINA REGINA VXOR HENRICI VIII

Catherine Parr, who worked hard to ensure cordial relations with Henry's children

Elizabeth's birth carried serious consequences for Mary. Following Catherine of Aragon's enforced departure from court in 1531, Mary had conspicuously sided with her mother's cause, much to Henry's displeasure. Efforts were made to prevent communication between mother and daughter and, following the birth of Elizabeth, Mary's status plummeted. She was informed that, as well as being deemed illegitimate (since the marriage to Catherine was unlawful) and being supplanted in the line of succession by her sister, she should no longer call herself a princess but merely 'Lady Mary'. Mary refused to accept such demotion and, by one account, "the princess answered that the title belonged to herself and to no other: making very wise remonstrances that what was proposed to her was very strange and dishonourable." Mary also flatly rejected all attempts to acknowledge her illegitimacy or accept the legislation of the Henrician Reformation, which had thrown off papal authority and made Henry the supreme head of the English Church.

The resulting tensions contributed in no small measure to the bouts of illness suffered by Mary during the 1530s.

Henry had always demonstrated affection for Mary (as he did with all his children), but this conscientious protest was deemed unacceptable. Mary's household was radically scaled down and envoys were despatched to secure her compliance. The imperial ambassador, in correspondence with the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, wrote of Mary's determination to resist such entreaties. She wrote to her father, congratulating him on his recent marriage to Jane Seymour, but placing strict limits on the degree to which she could obey the king's commandments. Henry was asked to "consider that I am but a woman and your child, who hath committed her soul only to God and her body to be ordered in this world as it shall stand with your pleasure." In other words, requests that crossed certain religious or ethical lines could not be transgressed. Eventually, however, Mary succumbed to the onslaught of pressure from the crown and, in a rather poignant letter of June 1536, she apologised to "my father, whom I have obstinately and inobediently offended." She hoped he would "forgive my offence therein and to take me to his most gracious mercy."

This opened up the possibility of genuine reconciliation. Catherine of Aragon had died in January 1536, removing one of the main causes of the rift between Henry and Mary. Anne Boleyn was no longer a complicating factor. During her time as queen, she may well have tried to deepen tensions between Mary and her father: one ambassador suggested that Anne hated Mary as much as Catherine of Aragon, "or more so, because she sees the king has some affection for her." Crucially, in October 1537, an event of the highest significance occurred. Henry was granted a son, Edward, who by any reckoning was now first in the line of succession. Mary's grumbles about precedence now became considerably less important. Elizabeth, too, could perhaps adopt a more sanguine attitude to the dynastic situation. She, like Mary before her, had been deeply damaged by the fall of her mother, Anne Boleyn, and acquired the status of an illegitimate child of an allegedly invalid marriage. Edward's arrival calmed the waters. As for Henry, he was simply delighted.

Celebrations were subdued by the death, shortly after Edward's birth, of Jane Seymour. Henry did manage to rally and lavished great affection on his new son. At the royal hunting lodge at Royston, in 1538, Henry was seen "with much mirth and joy, dallying with the prince in his arms a long space, and so holding him in a window to the sight and comfort of all." A rich humanist education lay in store for Edward, guided by luminaries including Richard Cox, the headmaster of Eton, and John Cheke, Regius professor of Greek at Cambridge. A precocious youth emerged and, through the 1540s, more cordial and settled relationships developed within the royal family. Henry's sixth wife, Catherine Parr, is often given much of the

St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, Henry's final resting place

Burying a king

Despite careful planning, Henry VIII never got the elaborate tomb he had desired

Henry had a penchant for elaborate funereal monuments. Early in his reign, he had hatched plans for the celebrated Florentine sculptor Pietro Torrigiano to embellish the tomb of Henry VII and his wife at Westminster. Henry also had a sharp eye on his own posterity, and aimed for a sumptuous memorial bedecked with "fine oriental jewels," marble pillars and gilded bronze angels. It was to be surrounded by more than 100 figures of saints and apostles, with a model of Henry on horseback taking centre stage. The plan got off to a good start. Thomas Wolsey had commissioned Benedetto da Rovezzano to work on his own final resting place and, after Wolsey's fall from power, Henry snapped up the work in progress as the basis for his tomb. The project was never completed, so when Henry died in 1547, he was simply laid to rest beneath the quire in St George's Chapel alongside Jane Seymour. Vague talk of completing the monument arose during Elizabeth's reign, but this came to nothing. Many a visitor to Windsor has sought out Henry's tomb in vain: all he or she will find is a modest marble plaque on the floor of the chapel.

HONY · SOYT · QVI · MAL · Y · PESE
1548
1544

An unflattering portrayal of an ageing Henry in an engraving by Cornelis Massys

> "Some suggest that [the will] was not signed until Henry's final days, or perhaps even forged after his death"

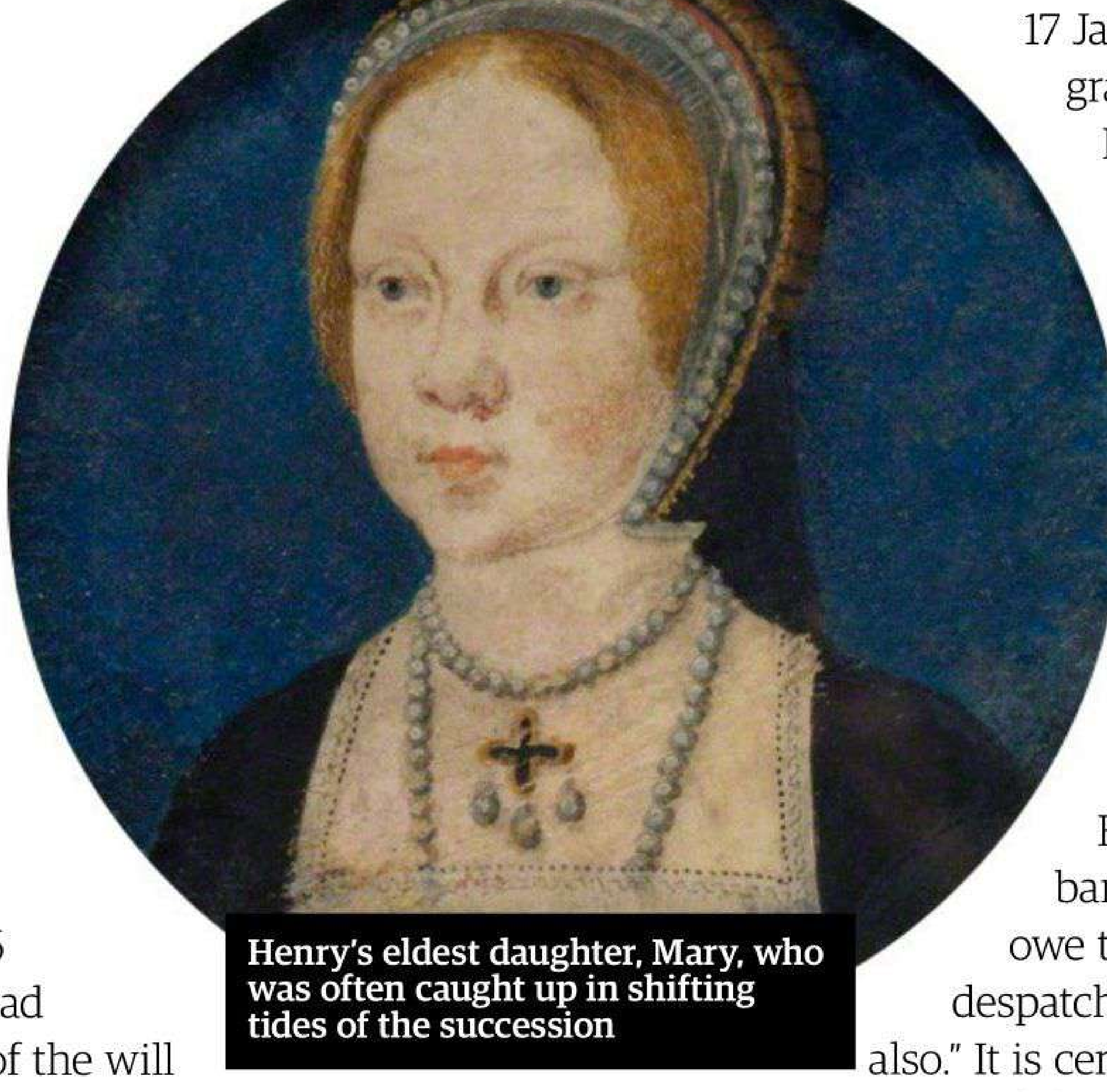
credit. She sustained friendly relationships with all of Henry's children, and Mary - far from the dour figure of historical legend - appears to have enjoyed a long-overdue period of relative happiness. She was welcome at court, and her brother, Edward, already displaying his censorious nature, even suggested that Mary should "attend no longer to foreign dances and merriments."

Complaints sometimes came in from Elizabeth about not seeing her father as often as she might like - in 1544 she wrote to Catherine Parr of her "exile" and wondered if the queen would "deign to recommend him to me" - but this was more petulance than a reflection of domestic reality. Henry had only recently dined with all three of his children ahead of his departure for France. Just as importantly, the statute book carried proof of a workable status quo. The 1544 Act of Succession named Edward as Henry's heir, with Mary and then Elizabeth named next in line. All seemed to be set fair though, as witnessed by events in the wake of Henry's death, appearances could sometimes be deceptive.

After Henry

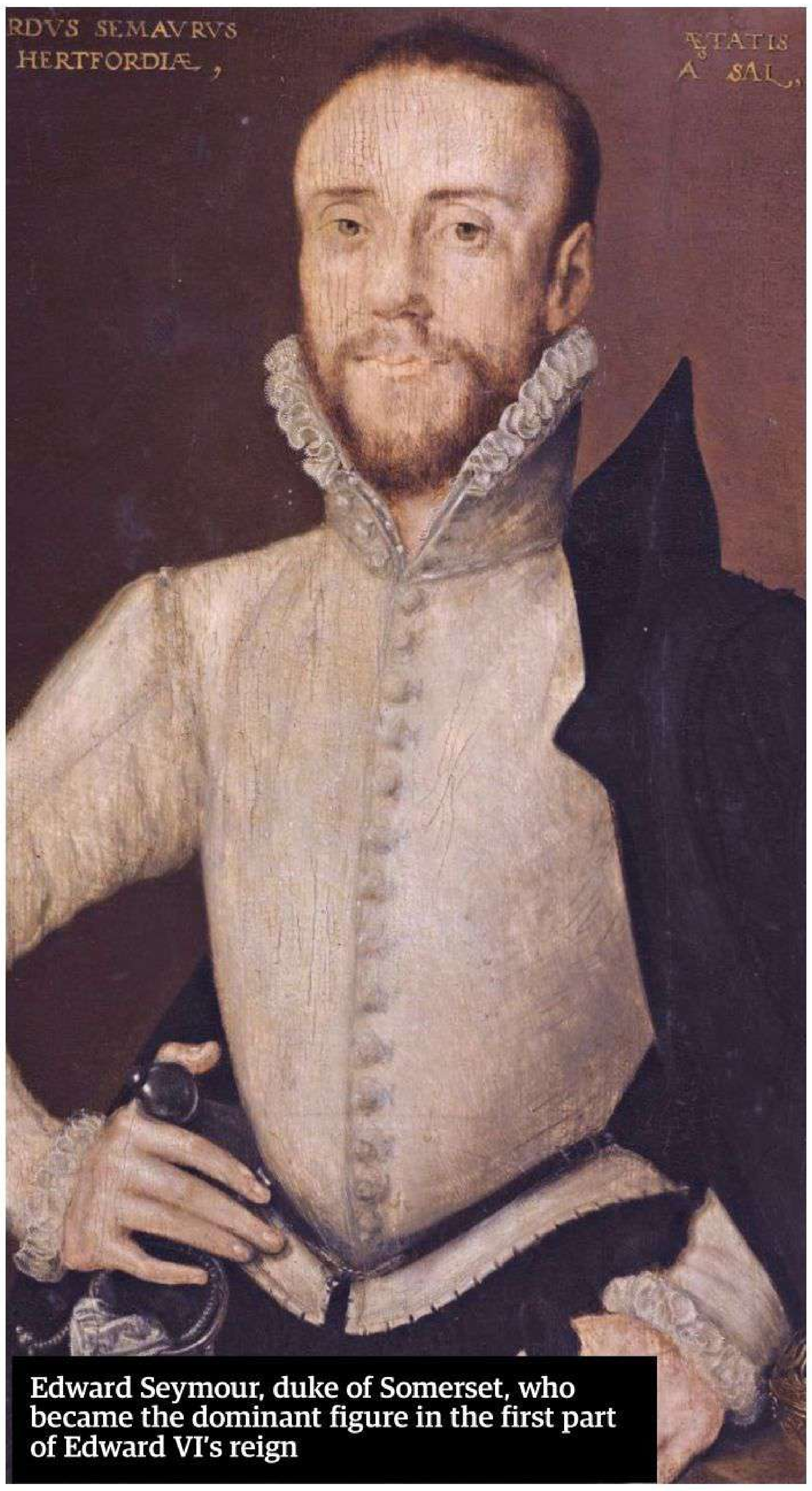
By January 1547, the possibility of any meaningful succession crisis was remote. Henry's nine-year-old son, Edward, was quickly pronounced as king without opposition. The precise details of the transfer of power have, however, fascinated and divided historians. On 26 December 1546, Henry had requested to see a copy of the will he had composed back in 1544. He made some alterations in the presence of his councillors, notably removing the conservative-minded bishop of Winchester, Stephen Gardiner, from any leading political role in Edward's reign. Edward's rule was to be overseen by a council of 16 executors, expandable to 28 at unusually busy times. No individual was singled out specifically as a formal protector of the realm. Henry is said to have signed the will on 30 December in front of ten witnesses, but here matters become rather hazy. All royal documents were carefully recorded, so the will ought to have appeared on December's roster. In fact, it only turns up as the penultimate item on the January list. This had led some scholars to suggest that it was not signed until Henry's final days, or perhaps even forged after his death. This seems highly unlikely, though. The will was signed with the dry stamp: a facsimile that was inked in by a scribe. But this had become common practice over the previous few years in order to save Henry from unnecessary chores. Perhaps more sinister was the inclusion of the so-called 'unfulfilled gift clause', which effectively gave Henry's executors free rein to award themselves with lands, titles and gifts as they saw fit. This was, to be sure, a rather unusual measure.

All told, it is certainly possible that alterations were made to the will but, on balance, it seems highly likely that Henry was fully aware of the contents. Despite his ailing health, the king remained alert during his final weeks. In late December, he oversaw the charges of treason drawn up against the earl of Surrey and, as late as 17 January, he was able to grant an audience to the French and Imperial ambassadors. While revising his will on 26 December, Henry displayed his customary irascibility when Anthony Denny queried some of his suggestions: "if you will not cease to trouble me," Henry is said to have barked, "by the faith I owe to God I will surely despatch thee out of my will also." It is certainly true that the composition of the proposed council slanted heavily in the direction of those of more reformist religious sensibilities, but this might simply have reflected Henry's desire to prevent a conservative backlash following his death. The argument that Henry had, at the end, begun to embrace Protestant ideas seems far-fetched, but the membership of the proposed council was not composed entirely of radical reformists. We should, in sum, be rather suspicious of elaborate conspiracy theories about those around Henry tampering with the king's wishes.

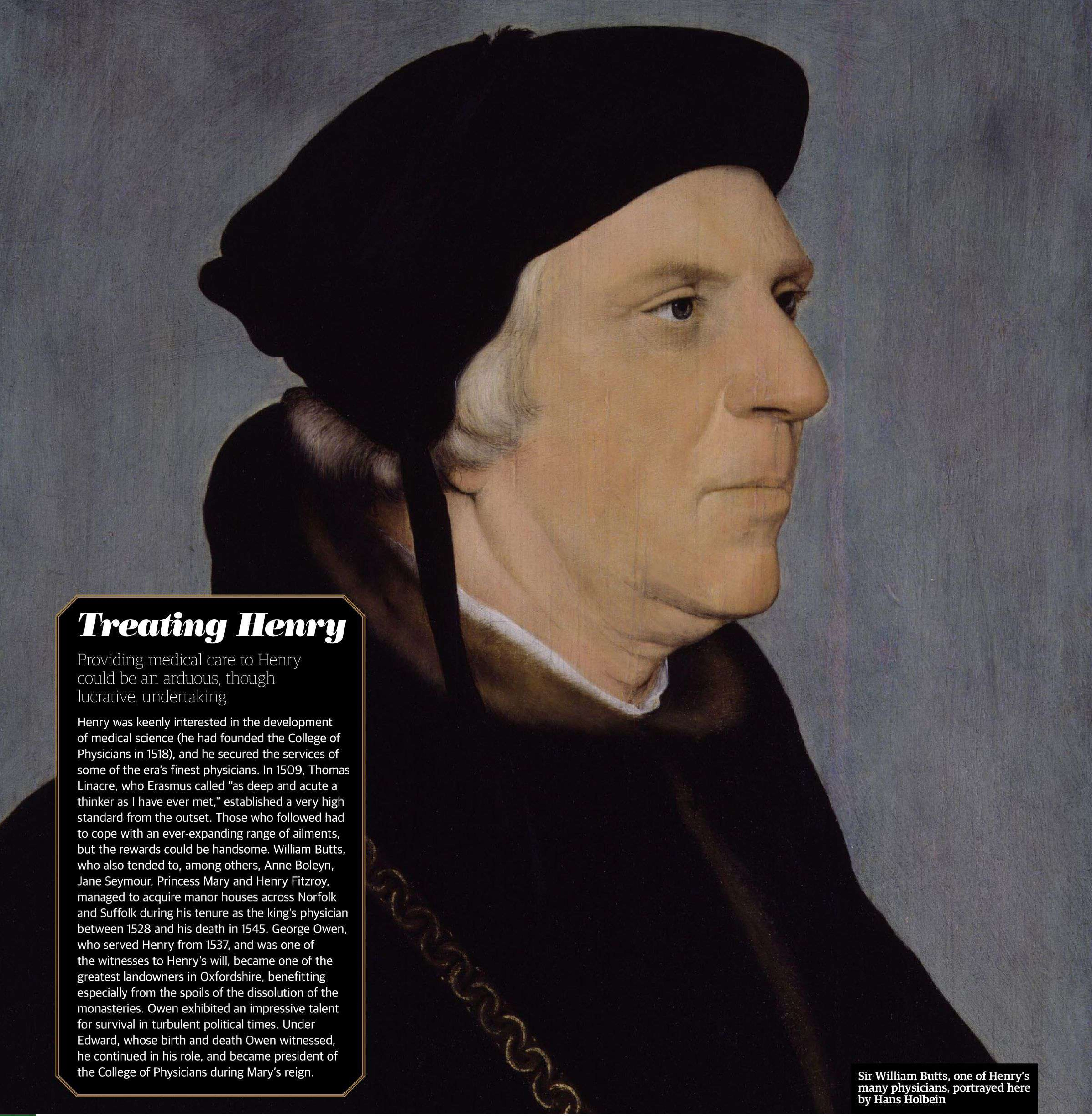

Henry's eldest daughter, Mary, who was often caught up in shifting tides of the succession

What cannot be gainsaid, however, is the fact that some of the objectives of Henry's will were swiftly ignored following his death. As early as the end of January 1547, the earl of Hertford, soon to be the duke of Somerset, had established himself as Lord Protector (which Henry had not sanctioned), and the council (whose membership Henry had intended to be static) had expanded to 26 members. Those of a more conservative stamp, such as the lord chancellor, Thomas Wriothesley, were robbed of their expected place in Edwardian politics. It may be true that Henry had always expected Hertford to take the leading role in Edward's government, but this was still a striking development.

Moreover, as settled as the issue of the succession might have appeared on paper, complications persisted. Edward's position was unassailable, but what would happen if the young king died? Henry's will placed Mary, and then Elizabeth, next in line to the throne, though they would forfeit that right if they married without the approval of the council. Next came the descendants of Henry's sister, Mary - the Grey and Clifford families. This seems like the most obvious option in the world, but it was fraught with difficulties. First, the descendants of Henry's sister, Margaret Tudor, who had married James IV of Scotland, were not



Edward Seymour, duke of Somerset, who became the dominant figure in the first part of Edward VI's reign



Sir William Butts, one of Henry's many physicians, portrayed here by Hans Holbein

Treating Henry

Providing medical care to Henry could be an arduous, though lucrative, undertaking

Henry was keenly interested in the development of medical science (he had founded the College of Physicians in 1518), and he secured the services of some of the era's finest physicians. In 1509, Thomas Linacre, who Erasmus called "as deep and acute a thinker as I have ever met," established a very high standard from the outset. Those who followed had to cope with an ever-expanding range of ailments, but the rewards could be handsome. William Butts, who also tended to, among others, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Princess Mary and Henry Fitzroy, managed to acquire manor houses across Norfolk and Suffolk during his tenure as the king's physician between 1528 and his death in 1545. George Owen, who served Henry from 1537, and was one of the witnesses to Henry's will, became one of the greatest landowners in Oxfordshire, benefitting especially from the spoils of the dissolution of the monasteries. Owen exhibited an impressive talent for survival in turbulent political times. Under Edward, whose birth and death Owen witnessed, he continued in his role, and became president of the College of Physicians during Mary's reign.

mentioned at all. Second, the position of Mary and Elizabeth was unfortunately not a straightforward one. Henry had announced the invalidity of his marriages to his two daughters' mothers, rendering Mary and Elizabeth technically illegitimate. This had been enshrined in the Succession Act of 1536. Henry had, though, been very careful to reserve the right to nominate to the line of succession as he saw fit, and this is precisely what happened with a subsequent Succession Act in 1544. Mary and Elizabeth were returned to the roster but, crucially, by nomination rather than right. This might seem like a rather small detail but, in terms of English legal tradition, it was, to say the least, innovative, and it would come back to haunt the Tudors. Supporters of the claims of Lady Jane Grey (a descendant of Henry's sister, Mary) and Mary, Queen of Scots (a descendant of Margaret Tudor) would take full advantage of questioning Henry's act of dynastic legerdemain.

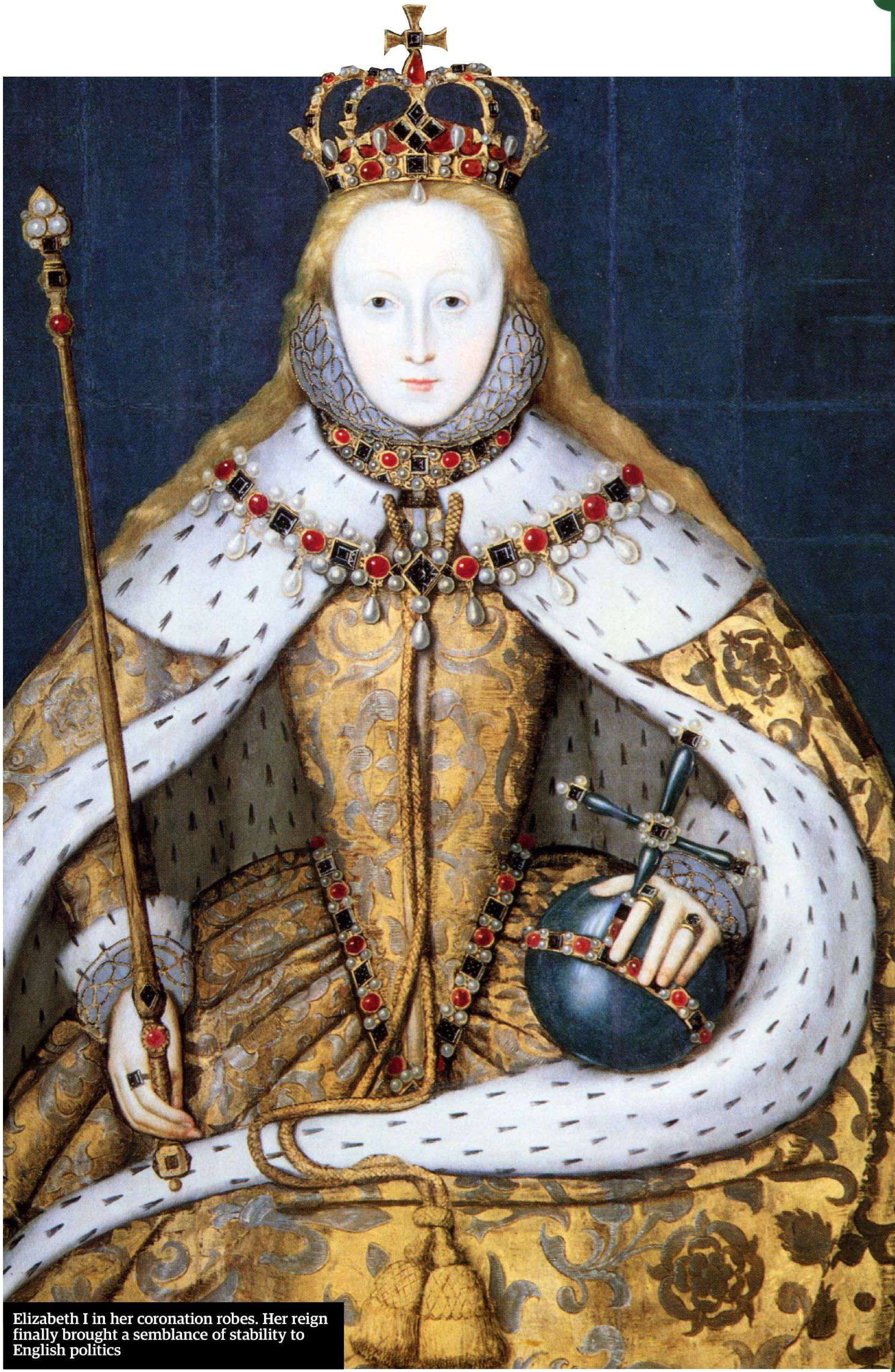
Brother & sisters

When Henry VIII eventually died, he left behind immense private wealth. It took a full 18 months to complete an inventory of all the books, artworks and jewels. He had amassed more than 2,000 tapestries, a quarter of a ton of gold and silver candlesticks, and 70 personally owned ships. His 55 residences were all crammed with both armaments and a rich selection of musical instruments: ivory flutes, bagpipes, 23 lutes and 19 viols. The inventory of his goods ran to more than 17,000 items.

Henry also left behind a deeply divided nation, and the sometimes-turbulent relationships between his three children were often caught up in the maelstrom. Edward's reign was blighted by factionalism, with John Dudley, earl of Warwick and later duke of Northumberland, supplanting Seymour as the realm's leading politician in 1549. In the same year, arguably the most perilous rebellion of the entire Tudor era erupted, motivated largely by resistance to religious change. Edward's reign witnessed a significant lurch to a more radical version of Protestantism: new liturgies emerged, the country became a safe harbour for religious exiles from the continent, and many of the remaining vestiges of the old faith were assaulted. This sea-change also damaged relations between Edward and his sister, Mary. The two had always been close, but Mary's refusal to conform to the religious settlement of the Edwardine regime and her continuing, public celebration of the mass brought the relationship close to breaking point.

This was one reason why, ahead of his death, Edward imposed the so-called 'devise', which, once more, played fast and loose with the issue of the succession. Neither Mary nor Elizabeth would be allowed to become monarch, the honours going instead to Lady Jane Grey. Edward died on 6 July 1553, and Jane was monarch by the 10th of the month. Mary managed to secure far more support than the veterans of Edward's council had imagined, however, and by 19 July, she had secured the crown. With an ounce or two of melodrama, but also with a keen sense of the situation's poignancy, John Ponet wrote of how "the innocent Lady Jane contrary to her will, yea by force, with tears dripping down her cheeks, suffered herself to be called queen of England." It had been one of the most tragic episodes in Tudor history.

Under Mary, it was the turn of the two sisters to come into conflict. It had always been difficult to pin down Elizabeth's religious sensibilities: a moderate version of Protestantism is as good an estimate as any. Mary, of course, set about the restoration of Catholicism and, while Elizabeth outwardly conformed, she became the focus of opposition to the Marian regime. In the wake of Thomas Wyatt's rebellion, which explicitly championed Elizabeth's cause, Elizabeth was banished to house arrest at Woodstock Palace. At one stage, her execution had not even been out of the question.


Elizabeth I in her coronation robes. Her reign finally brought a semblance of stability to English politics

As always, the succession loomed large during Mary's reign. A wildly unpopular marriage with Philip II of Spain produced no children, only embarrassing false pregnancies created by Mary's always-fragile imagination. Her reign has often been dismissed as a failure but, alongside the martyring of some 300 people, the ravages of disease, a disastrous war with France (resulting in the loss of Calais), and a deepening economic malaise, there was also achievement. England expanded its trade horizons (notable in Muscovy), and Mary's attempt to return the nation to obedience to Rome was defined by vibrancy as well as brutality. Had Mary lived, England would almost certainly have remained a Catholic nation, perhaps in perpetuity.

Historians used to refer to the period between 1547 and 1558 as the mid-Tudor crisis, though this is perhaps an over-exaggeration. The key problem was that monarchs developed a habit of dying far sooner than expected. Still, by the time Elizabeth ascended to the throne, England was long overdue for a period of relative stability. It certainly secured one over the next four decades, although the Virgin Queen's refusal to marry and produce an heir would lead, yet again, to succession crises. In the end, and in a final irony, the Stuarts of Scotland, entirely excluded from mention in Henry VIII's will, would secure the English throne. The nation's dynastic twists and turns were never anything but interesting.

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A lasting legacy

The infamous king's enduring memory continues to enthral to this day

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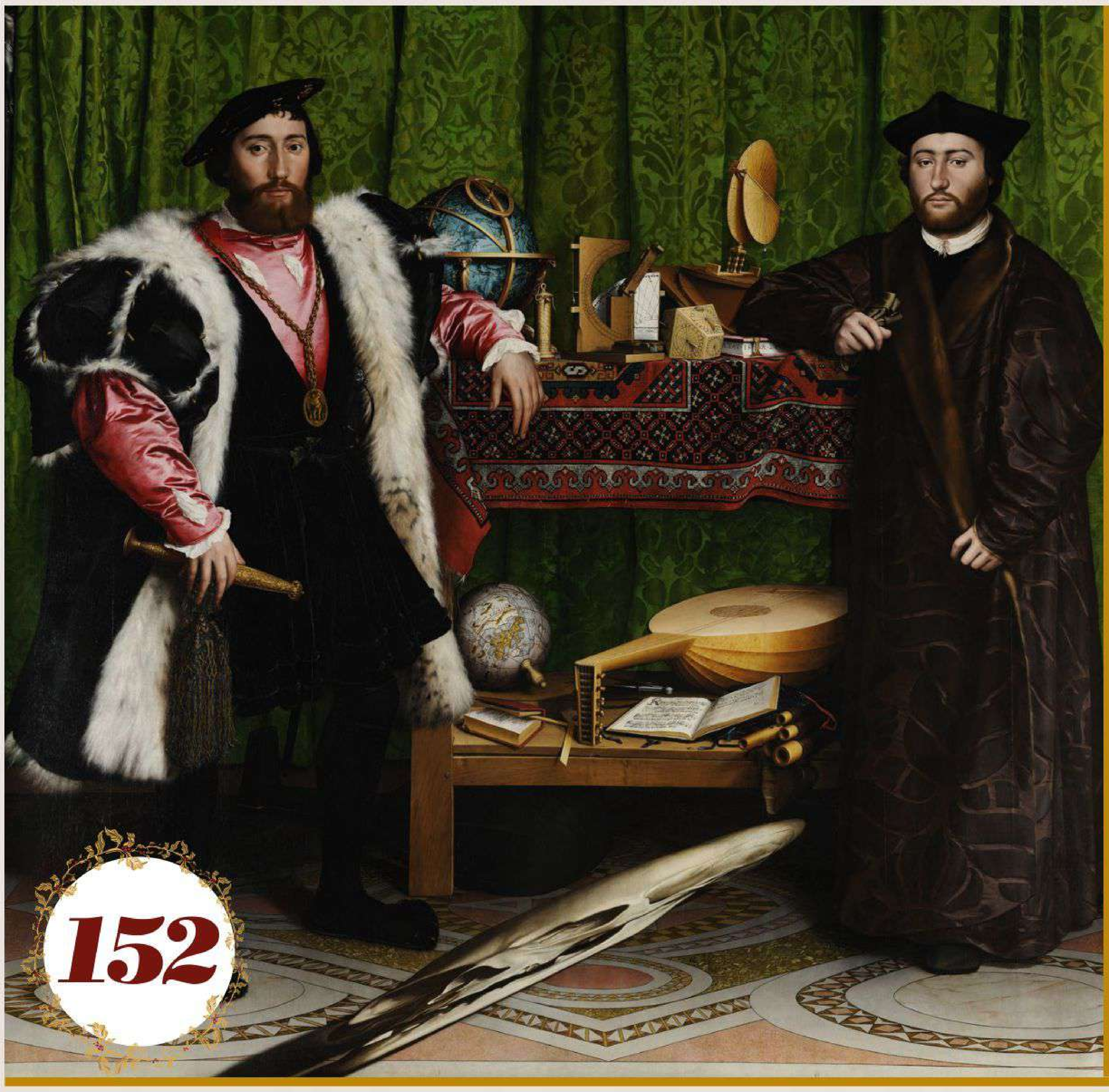
The king's painter

The enduring appeal of Hans Holbein the Younger's royal portraiture



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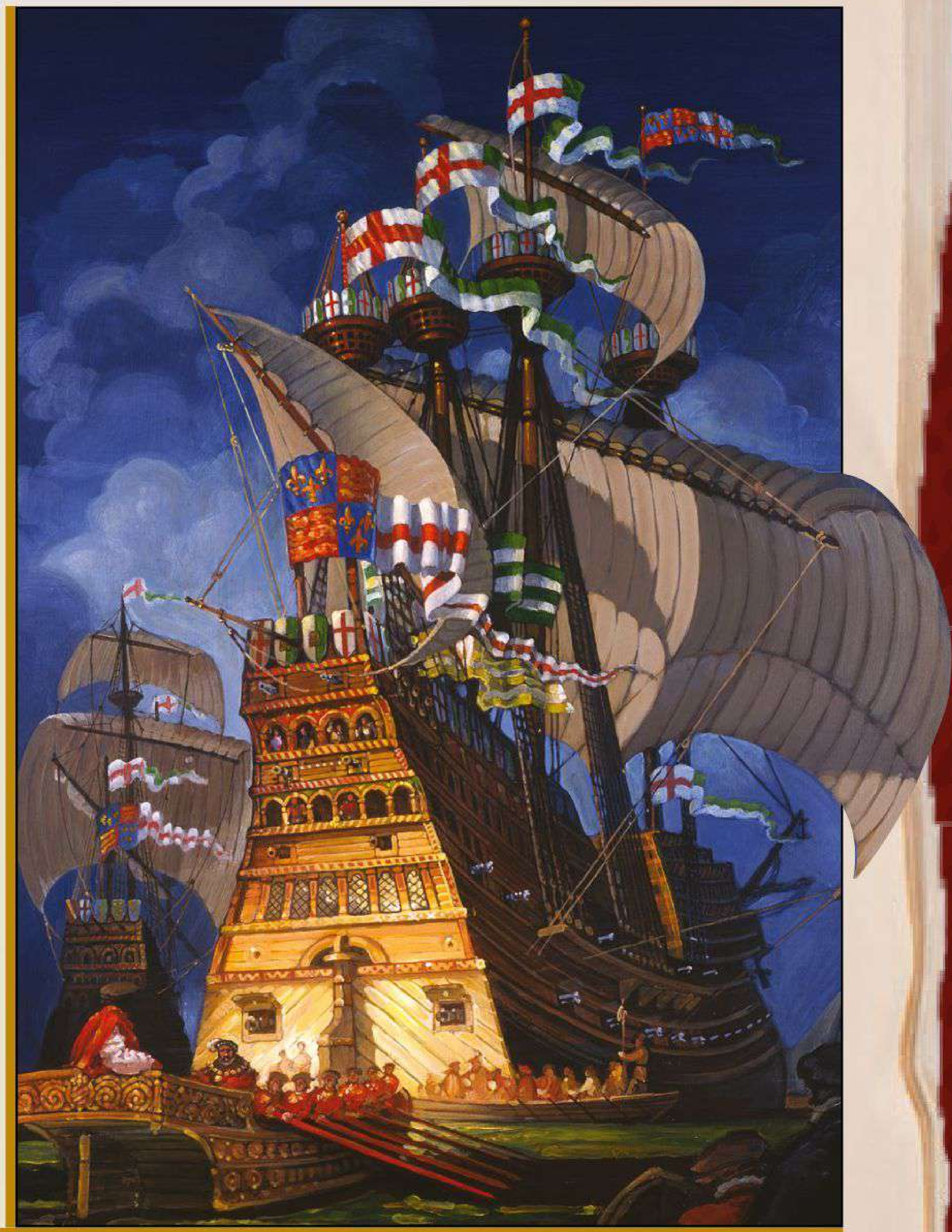

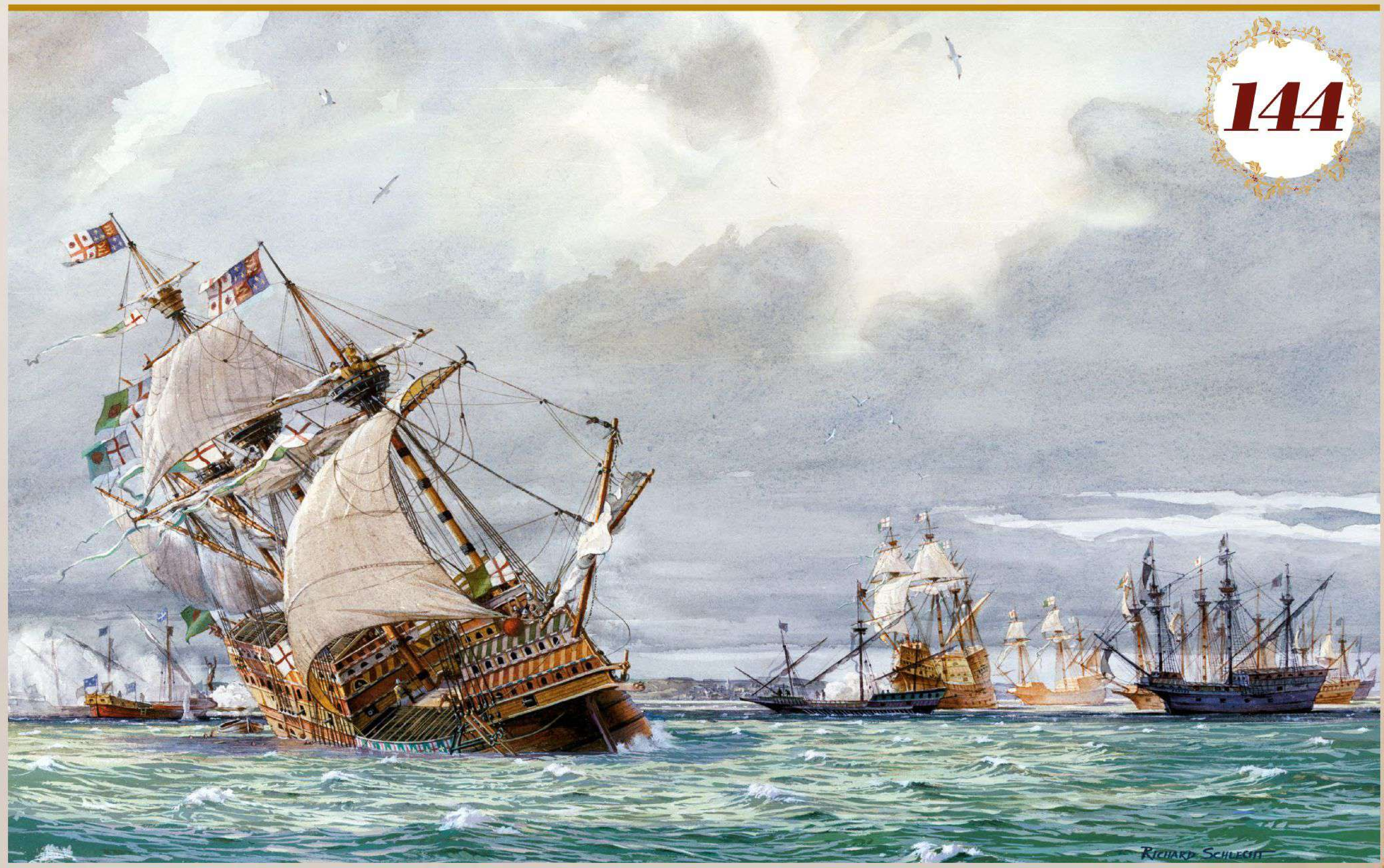

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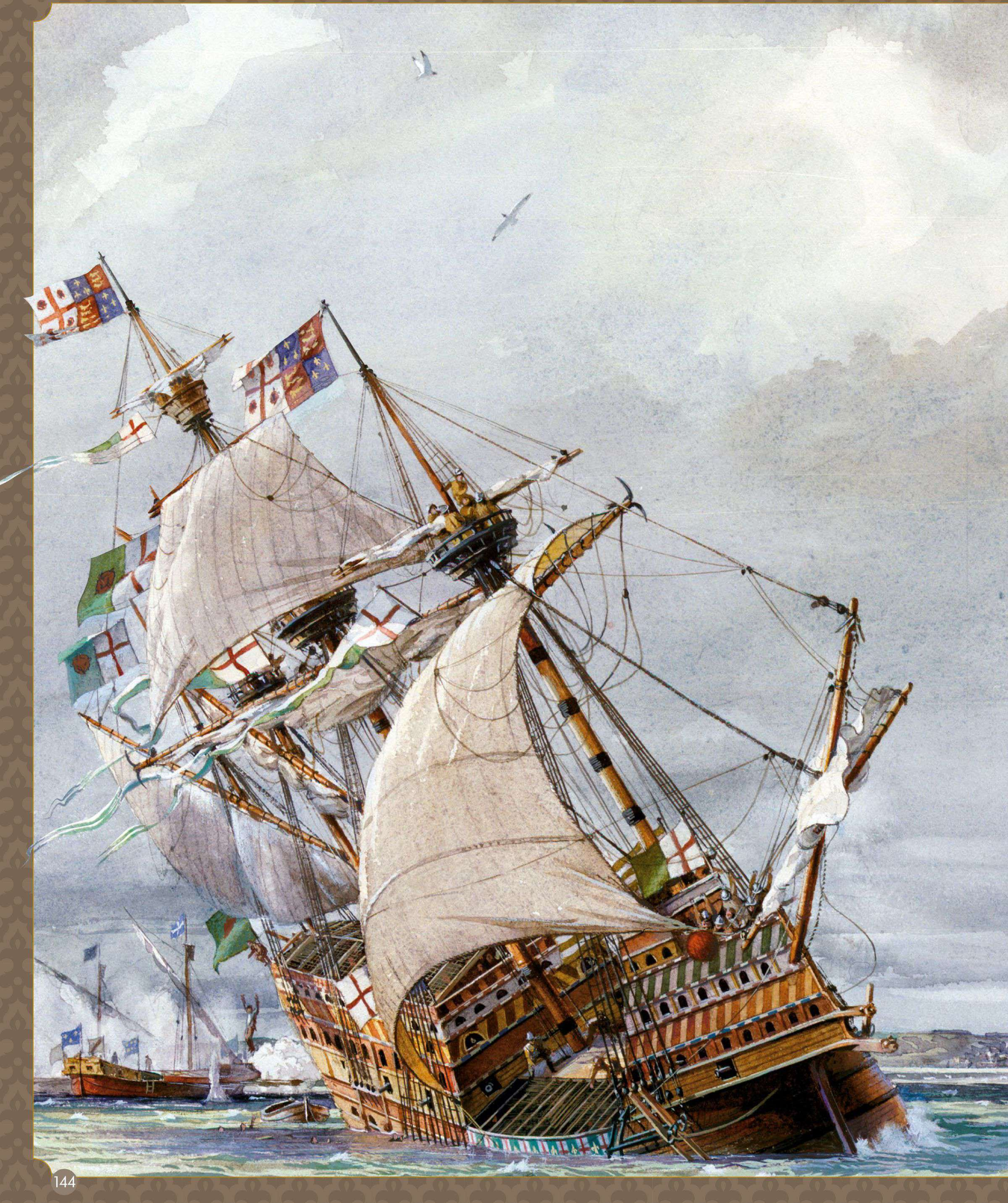
RICHARD SCHLECHT



Secrets of the Mary Rose

This famed Tudor ship was Henry VIII's pet project, but why did his fleet's flagship sink suddenly in the Solent?

Words ALEX HOSKINS

As the last vestiges of the Mary Rose were consumed by the very sea it had sought to conquer, the men who would sink to the bottom of the ocean with it could not have known that they were to become part of one of the greatest archaeological sites of the Tudor period, preserved like no other for historians of the 20th century to marvel at and analyse for decades. This particular disaster, unexpected and perhaps entirely unnecessary, was rare – the loss of life may have seemed futile, but without it, we might have a very different understanding of the Tudor period. But it is not only for its immense bounty of historical artefacts that the Mary Rose has endured as one of England's most notable shipwrecks. It is also, as ever, the mysteries surrounding its story that have seen it remain a point of fascination for history enthusiasts and experts alike. There is plenty we can't be sure of when we ask that simple-sounding question, "Why did the Mary Rose sink?"

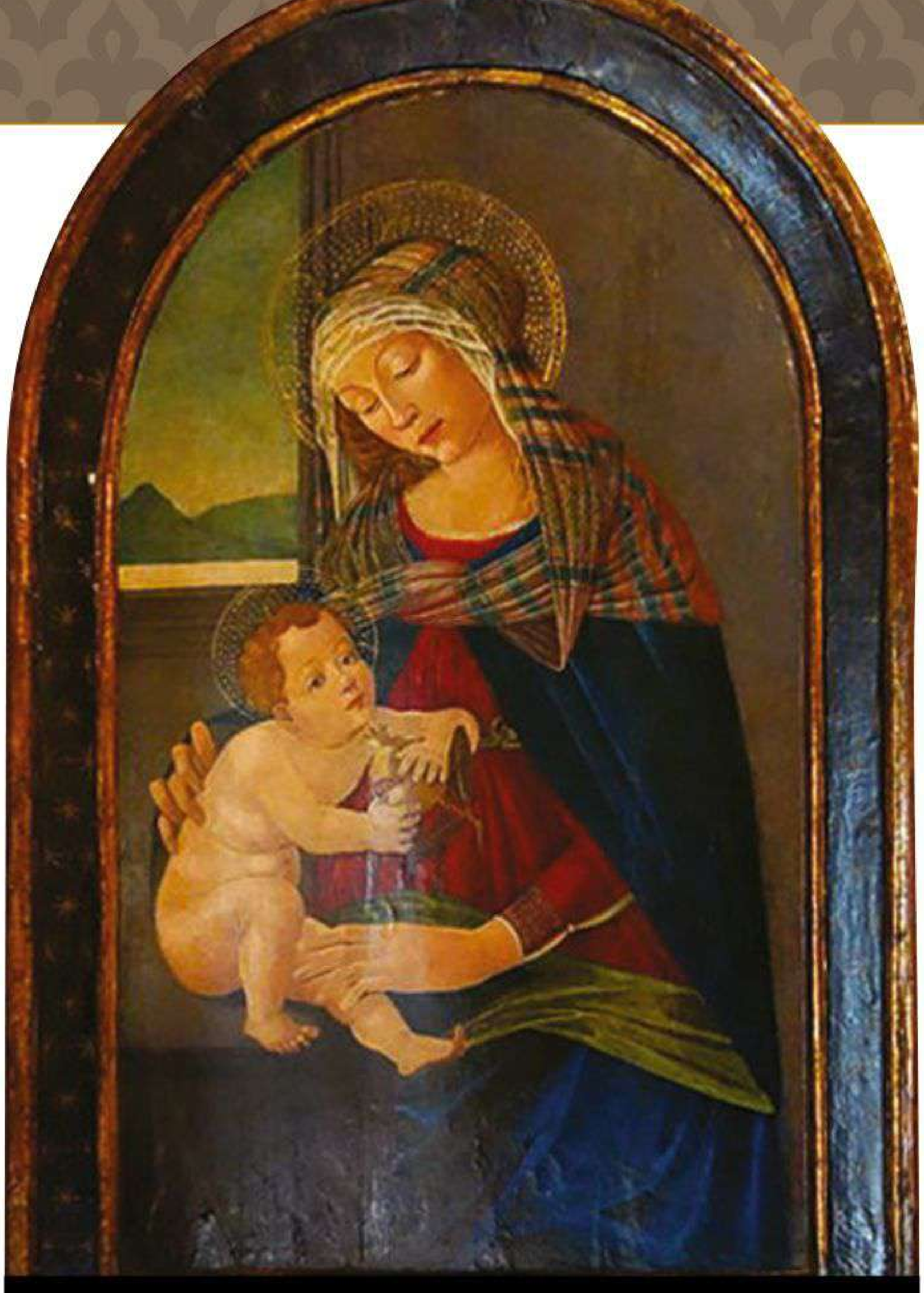
What we do know is that the Mary Rose was commissioned by Henry VIII as part of a new navy. He had inherited a rather measly fleet and set about improving it for the many battles that lay ahead with sea ships known as carracks – the Mary Rose and another commission, the Peter Pomegranate. Historians still debate exactly who the boat was named after (if indeed, it was named after a person at all, as this was not the

Three French wars

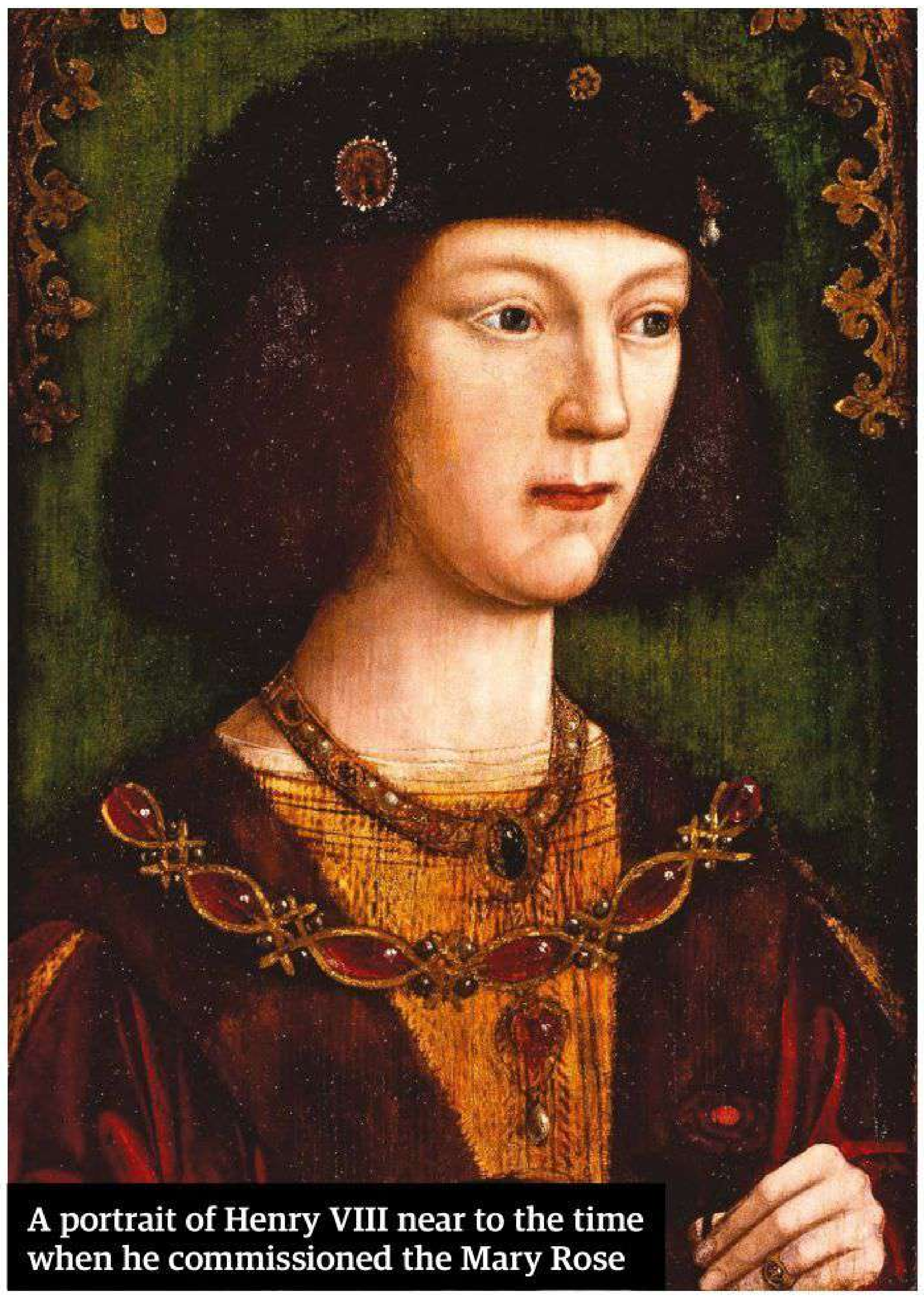
The Mary Rose's time at sea

The reason for the Mary Rose's outing on the Solent was a strategic battle, its last in a series of three, against the French. The first had begun in 1512, led by Sir Edward Howard, lord high admiral of Henry's fleet, with the Mary Rose as his flagship. The ship had raided Brittany, with 12 Breton ships captured. Upon returning to Southampton, Henry VIII graced the ship with his presence, visiting briefly before it sailed out to the Battle of Saint-Mathieu. It was by all accounts another success. The Mary Rose, it seems clear, was a formidable ship at the start of its career. Following this, the vessel was involved in skirmishes and played its part in the Battle of Flodden Field, carrying troops to Newcastle. In the autumn of 1513, Henry's sister Mary was married to the King of France, Louis XII, which ended the wars – for now, at least.

By 1522, the amicable relations between the English and French were over. The Mary Rose set off again ready to capture the port of Morlaix on 1 July. It went off without a hitch, and the ship returned triumphant. The Scots joining forces with the English in 1525 brought about victory once again, and the Battle of Pavia saw an end to the conflict. The third battle came in 1545, as a result of Henry's vulnerability following the break with Rome, and a promise made to HRE Charles V, intended to make alliances. But Charles made his own pact with the French, leaving Henry to fight the battle that would sink the Mary Rose.



The Madonna and Child with a pomegranate, which may have given the Peter Pomegranate its name



A portrait of Henry VIII near to the time when he commissioned the Mary Rose

> "One of the most significant finds on the wreck was a collection of 137 complete longbows and thousands of arrows"

trend at the time). Popular belief often sides with Henry's sister, Mary Tudor, while it is generally considered more likely the name was a tribute to the Virgin Mary, known at the time as the 'Mystic Rose'. This also chimes well with the naming of the Peter Pomegranate, as the pomegranate is a symbol of resurrection and eternal life – often associated with Jesus. The fruit is even shown in the hand of Jesus in some depictions of the Madonna and Child. The pomegranate was also a symbol of the house of Aragon, which was certainly a consideration when Henry chose the name for the boat, as he was married to Catherine of Aragon. When they were divorced, Henry renamed the Peter Pomegranate as Peter.

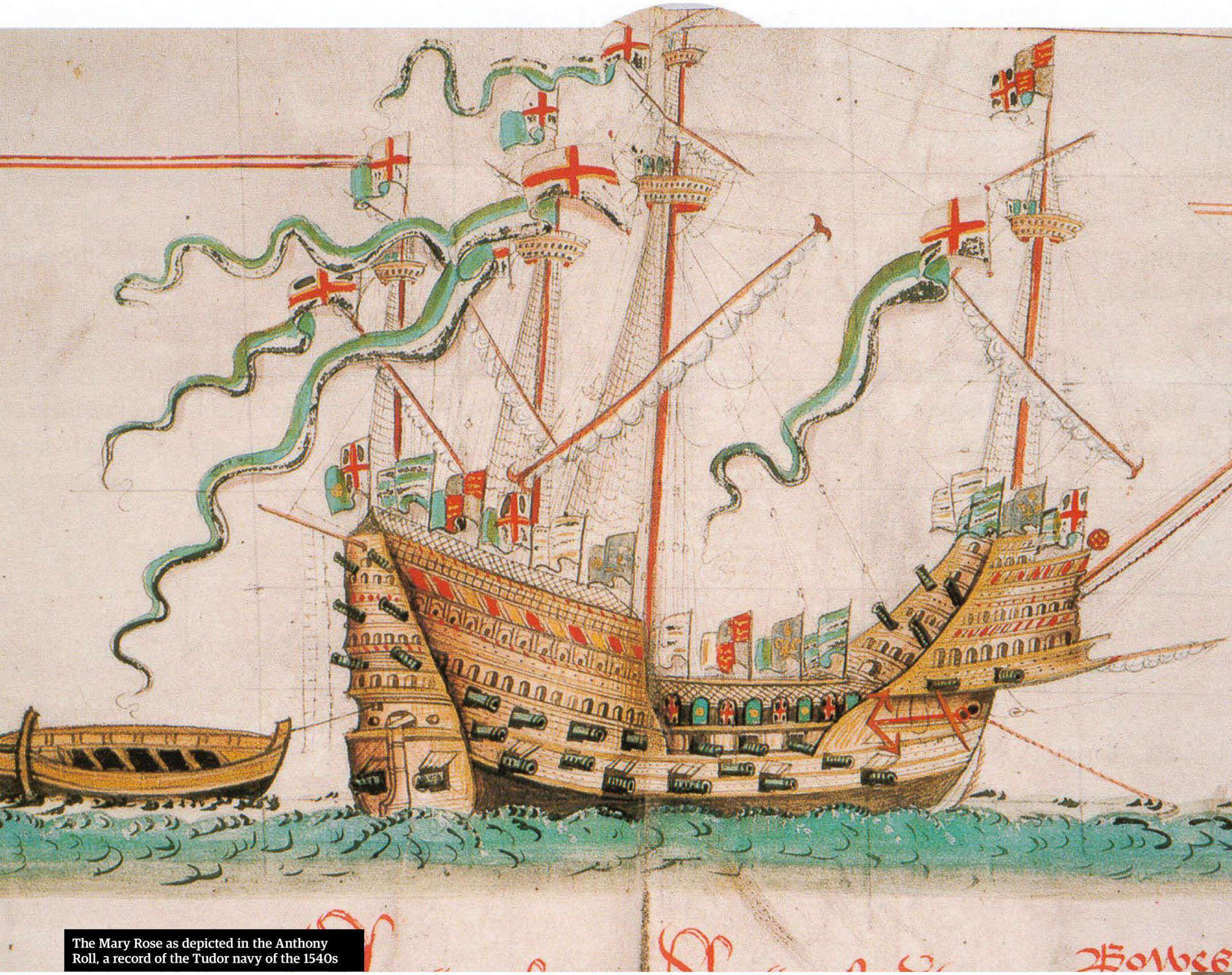
However, the boat's name is not the only source of mystery. The end of the Mary Rose came suddenly, on 19 July 1545. Having survived a glittering career of three French wars, from 1512 to 1545 (with rest and restoration in between), the Mary Rose was sunk dramatically in the Battle of the Solent, much to the surprise and delight of the French. It was a stacked battle – the French fleet numbering 128 ships, while Henry's was just 80. But it was soon to be down one notable ship.

The French account of the battle tells that on the morning of the fateful 19 July, after two days of battle with no real loss to either side, French ships made an attempt to lure the English out of their relative safety in the Solent to come within closer range of the French galleys. The weather had been calm all day – and yet suddenly, the Mary Rose began to sink.

If we look to the English records, the events played out slightly differently. Henry VIII had been dining with Admiral Viscount Lisle on the fleet's pride and joy, the Henry Grace à Dieu, the night before the sinking. At dinner, Henry bestowed the Mary Rose upon George Carew, which, with the Mary Rose being the fleet's second-largest vessel after the Henry Grace à Dieu, promoted him to the heady heights of vice admiral of the fleet. Little could he or anyone else know, he would soon be in charge of a ship that was doomed to failure. Some accounts claim that Henry VIII looked on from Southsea Castle as the Mary Rose sank – we can only imagine how it would feel to see the flagship of your fleet sink, without discernible reason.

Whichever order of events is correct, whether French or English, the question remains: what was the cause of this sudden trajectory toward the abyss? There are four main theories for the ship and crew's shocking demise. The first of these stems from the same French accounts referenced previously, in which one lone French cavalry officer claimed that the ship had been sunk by an onslaught from French guns, which had been in the process of trying to goad the English into coming further away from the shallow water at Spitbank. The likelihood of this would depend upon the position of the hit: if it was a cannonball low in the ship's hull, water would inevitably leak into the vessel causing an upset to the balance, resulting in the ship toppling over.

Another theory is that the vessel had been overloaded, either with guns, men or both. The ship had, during improvement works while it was kept in reserve between 1522 and 1535, gained an extra capacity of some 100 tons. It was caulked and made as new, and was fitted with extra bracing, indicating that the Mary Rose was expected to



The Mary Rose as depicted in the Anthony Roll, a record of the Tudor navy of the 1540s

carry heavier loads in the future. We can't know for sure exactly what changes were made, but it has been suggested that extra gun ports were also cut to allow greater fire power. However, it's generally considered unlikely that overloading with guns could be the reason for the topple, as the ship had successfully made the journey from London.

Overloading of soldiers is a much more likely contributing factor in the disaster. The ship was built to hold 400 men, but reports state that 700 were aboard. Imagining the scene of panic among the crew and soldiers as the boat began to sink suddenly, packed like sardines with no escape route, is truly sobering.

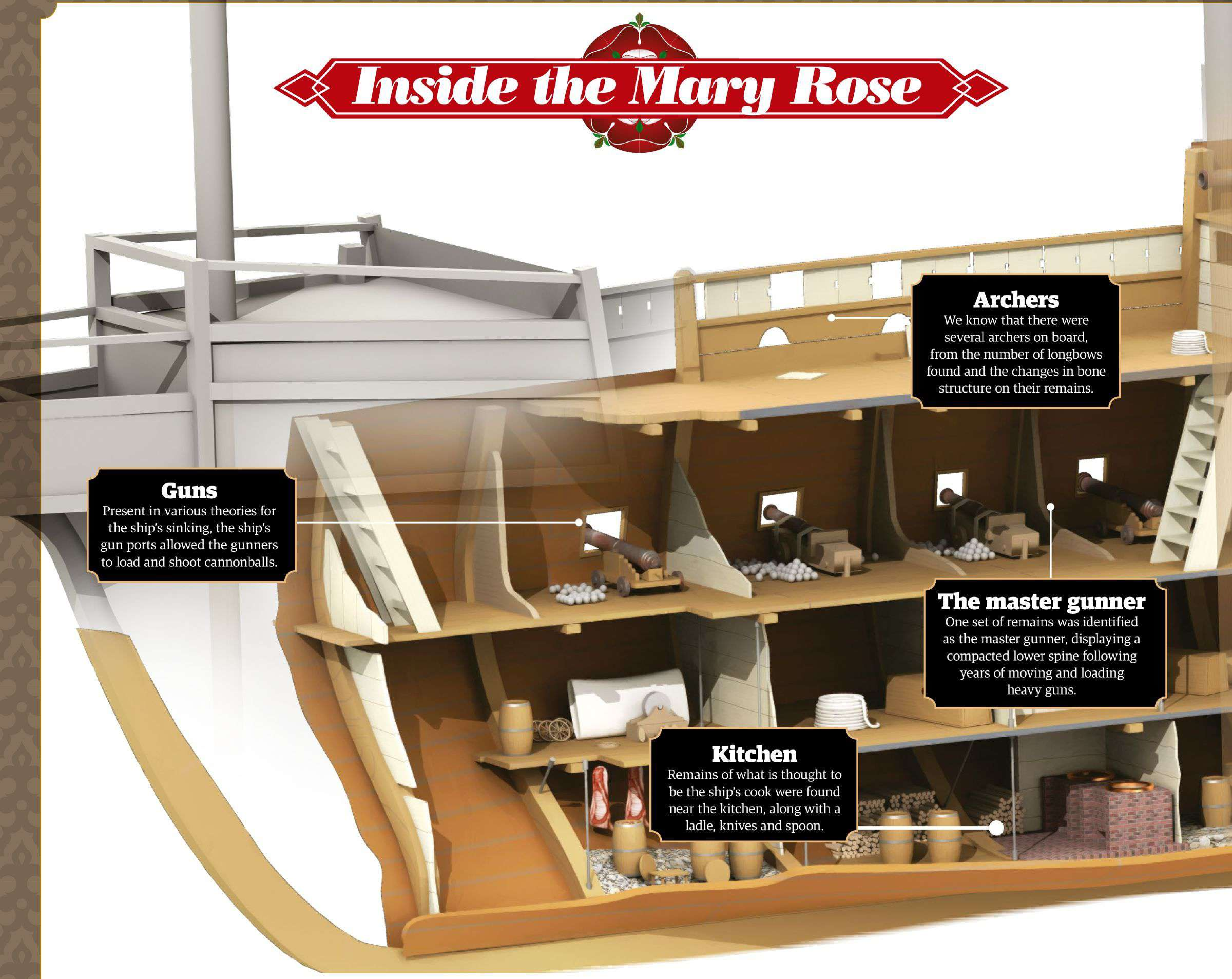
For the underwater archaeologists who uncovered the bodies of many of those men on board four centuries later (the wreck was rediscovered in 1836 by a local fisherman, and in 1965 a local diving group, led by a diver called Alexander McKee, identified the first part of the ship's wreck), it must have been a shocking, while certainly exciting, sight to behold.

A catastrophic case of human error is cited as another possible explanation for the ship's end – with a crew of 700 men, it is not beyond the realms of possibility that in the heat of battle, a crew member could make a fatal mistake, perhaps leaving open a spot that should have been defended, or failing to close a gun port.

A final theory, which seems almost too simple to have claimed the lives of so many, is that a rogue gust of wind caught the ship while it was in a vulnerable position, turning to make use of the guns on its other side. Whichever of these theories tells of the deciding factor, we do know that after the initial tipping of the ship, seawater gushed in through the gun ports, sealing the fate of the ship and its men once and for all.

Dr Peter Marsden, a historian and archaeologist specialising in Tudor ships, and editor of the book *Mary Rose: Your Noblest Shippe* – which examines what we know about the ship and its structure – considers that the most likely theory is also the most tantalisingly straightforward. He told us: "It seems that the reason given for the sinking in 1545 applies. It was simply that on a day of a quiet breeze, the ship had its gun port lids open having just fired at a French warship, when an unexpected gust of wind heeled it over and it flooded." This is in line with a rare eyewitness account

Inside the Mary Rose



Archers
We know that there were several archers on board, from the number of longbows found and the changes in bone structure on their remains.

Guns
Present in various theories for the ship's sinking, the ship's gun ports allowed the gunners to load and shoot cannonballs.

The master gunner
One set of remains was identified as the master gunner, displaying a compacted lower spine following years of moving and loading heavy guns.

Kitchen
Remains of what is thought to be the ship's cook were found near the kitchen, along with a ladle, knives and spoon.

of the tragedy, which reported that the ship had fired all of its guns and was turning in order to use the guns on the opposing side, when it was ambushed by an unexpected gust.

However, Dr Marsden is also keen to consider the impact of communication and possible human error in the events leading up to the tragedy at sea: "It could also be that having many foreign nationals who could not speak English on board added to the problem in that they did not understand orders given in English," Marsden told us, bringing to light another factor that very likely contributed to the disastrous sinking of the Mary Rose.

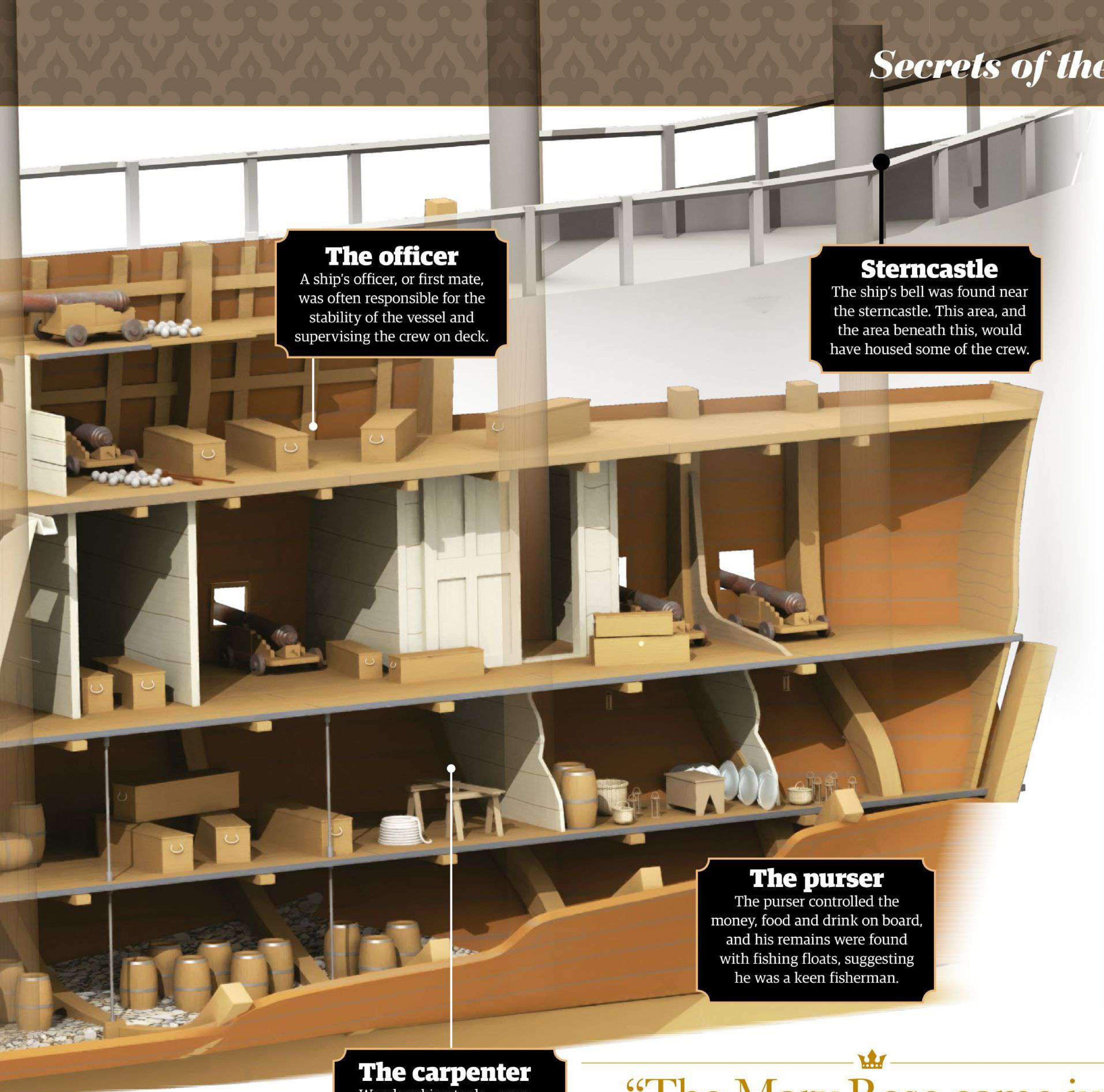
Analysis of the skeletons of the bodies found with the Mary Rose revealed that some of the men aboard were not British, but of Mediterranean or continental European extraction. This could have caused a language barrier that made orders much more difficult to follow for the seamen. However, analysis also suggested that the majority of the men hailed from England's West Country. It is claimed that the admiral of the Mary Rose, Sir George Carew, cried out during the chaos that he was in charge of the, "sort of knaves I cannot rule," hinting at disobedience and incompetence on board the ship.

The picture this paints of the last hours of the men on board is one of chaos, panic and hopelessness. A picture of a crew sunk by their own disobedience, and a general lack of understanding between the crew on board. But levels of illiteracy were perhaps surprisingly high among men at this time, and particularly among the ambitious and somewhat 'upwardly mobile' profession of sailing.

About 20 per cent of the male population was literate according to a study of education when Elizabeth I took the throne in 1558. The discovery of artefacts found on board bearing letters – for example, a knife handle and a trencher bearing the letter 'W' and a spoon bearing a reversed 'N' – goes further to suggest that the men on board were at least able to read the alphabet. But, as is often the issue with drawing conclusions about the Mary Rose, we cannot truly know the levels of literacy or competence among the crew.

Finally, Dr Marsden states, one last inconvenience would become a catalyst for the ship's demise: "The inefficient and slow system of closing gun port lids forbade making an immediate response to heeling over." So once the water had begun gushing in to these open ports, there would be no chance of stopping it – or of stopping the ship from sinking.

Questions like this one of the fitness of the design of the ship lead to another route of inquiry – should more have been done to make the ship safe for the crew? Was the safety of the crew even a consideration for the war-mongering



The officer
A ship's officer, or first mate, was often responsible for the stability of the vessel and supervising the crew on deck.

Sterncastle
The ship's bell was found near the sterncastle. This area, and the area beneath this, would have housed some of the crew.

The purser
The purser controlled the money, food and drink on board, and his remains were found with fishing floats, suggesting he was a keen fisherman.

The carpenter
Woodworking tools – axes, planes and more – were found near the remains of one man, marking him out as a carpenter.

FACTS

10,000
Approximate number of artefacts found on the shipwreck

25 Estimated number of crewmembers that survived

34 YEARS
Mary Rose served as Henry VIII's flagship

£133,000
was spent on flags for the ship (in today's money)

600
Number of tons the Mary Rose weighed when it was made

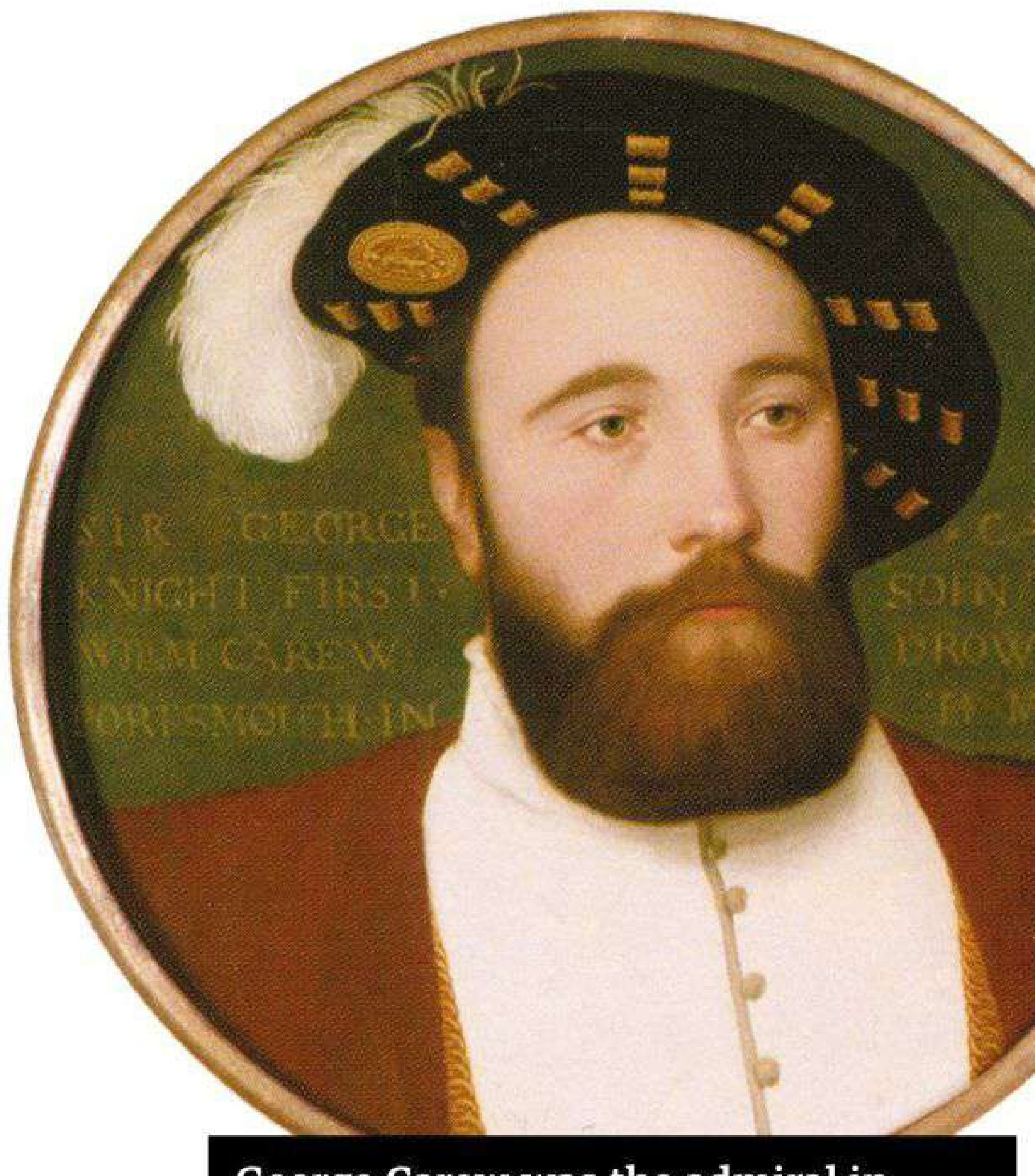
> "The Mary Rose came just before a watershed change for the design of seaships"

king or the ship's designers and builders? Dr Marsden explained, "Of course, safety was a vital consideration in the period, but as the technology of warfare at sea was pushing ahead quite fast, there were vulnerable areas of danger on board that had not been addressed.

"For example, the system of opening and closing the gun port lids on the main deck was operated by men pulling ropes on the upper deck, rather than, as in later times, by the main deck gunners themselves, as can be seen on HMS Victory." This would have meant that communication would have been difficult, sight may have been impaired as the gun port lid operators were further from the equipment they were dealing with, and any problems would take longer to fix. Considering the prevalence of the slow closing of the gun ports as a cause in the ship's sinking, the operation of lids by men on the main deck was a simple innovation that came far too late for the Mary Rose.

Another cause for concern was the use of what were effectively 'trap doors' located around the ship's deck, inviting disaster as the men went about their daily business. Dr Marsden, who has spent significant time with the wreck's remains, made the point that "the hatches along the middle of each deck had no gratings, but simply wooden covers. This meant that when a hatch was left open for access, in the dim light below a man might not notice the hole in the deck and could fall and break a bone." It might seem an obvious hazard, particularly by today's highly regulated health-and-safety standards, but in the 16th century, it was par for the course.

However, things were soon to change. "There were other problems, but shortly after the Mary


SIR GEORGE CAREW
KNIGHT FIRST SOEN TO SIR
WILM CAREW DROWN'D AT
PORTSMOUTH IN THE MARY RO

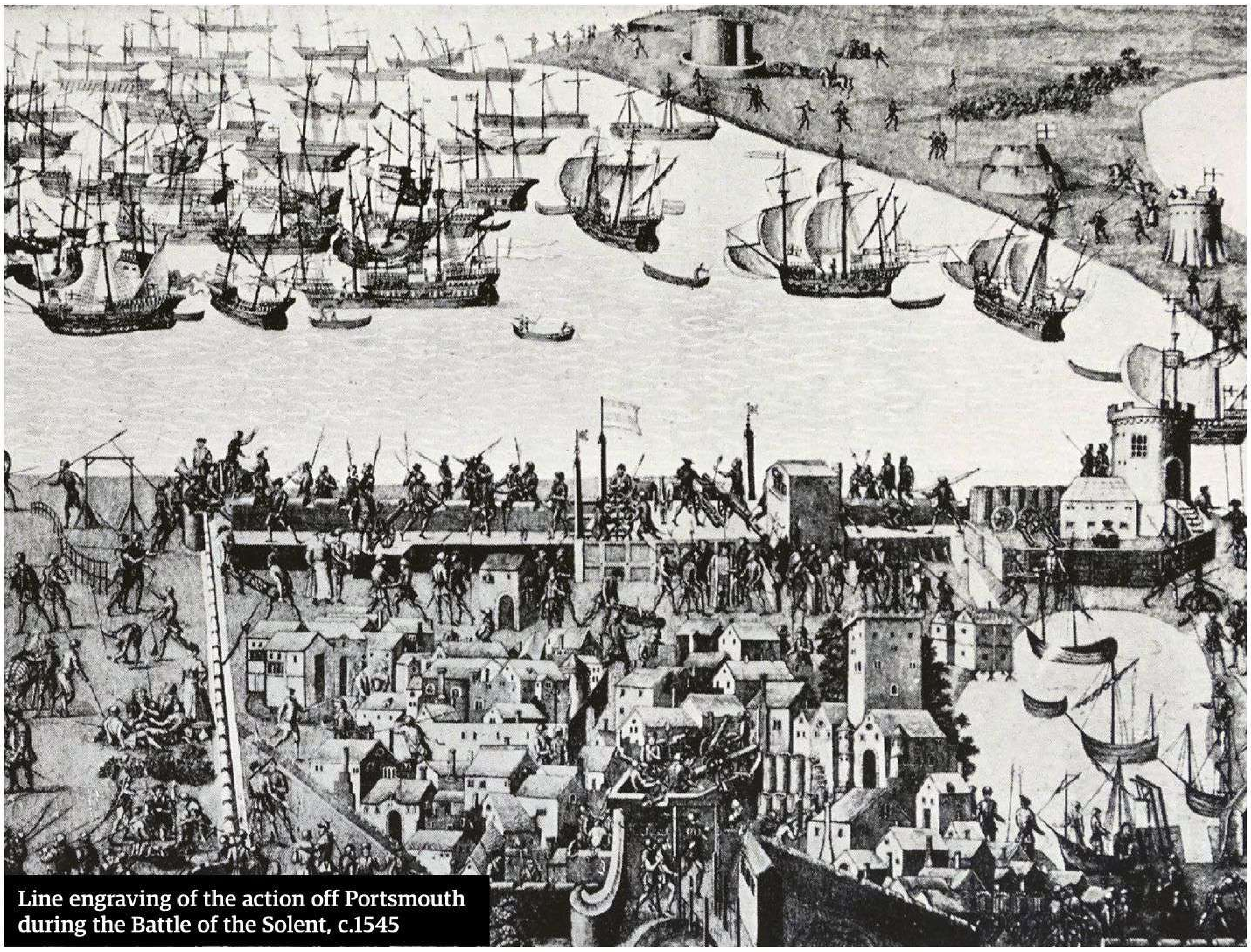
George Carew was the admiral in charge of the Mary Rose when it sank

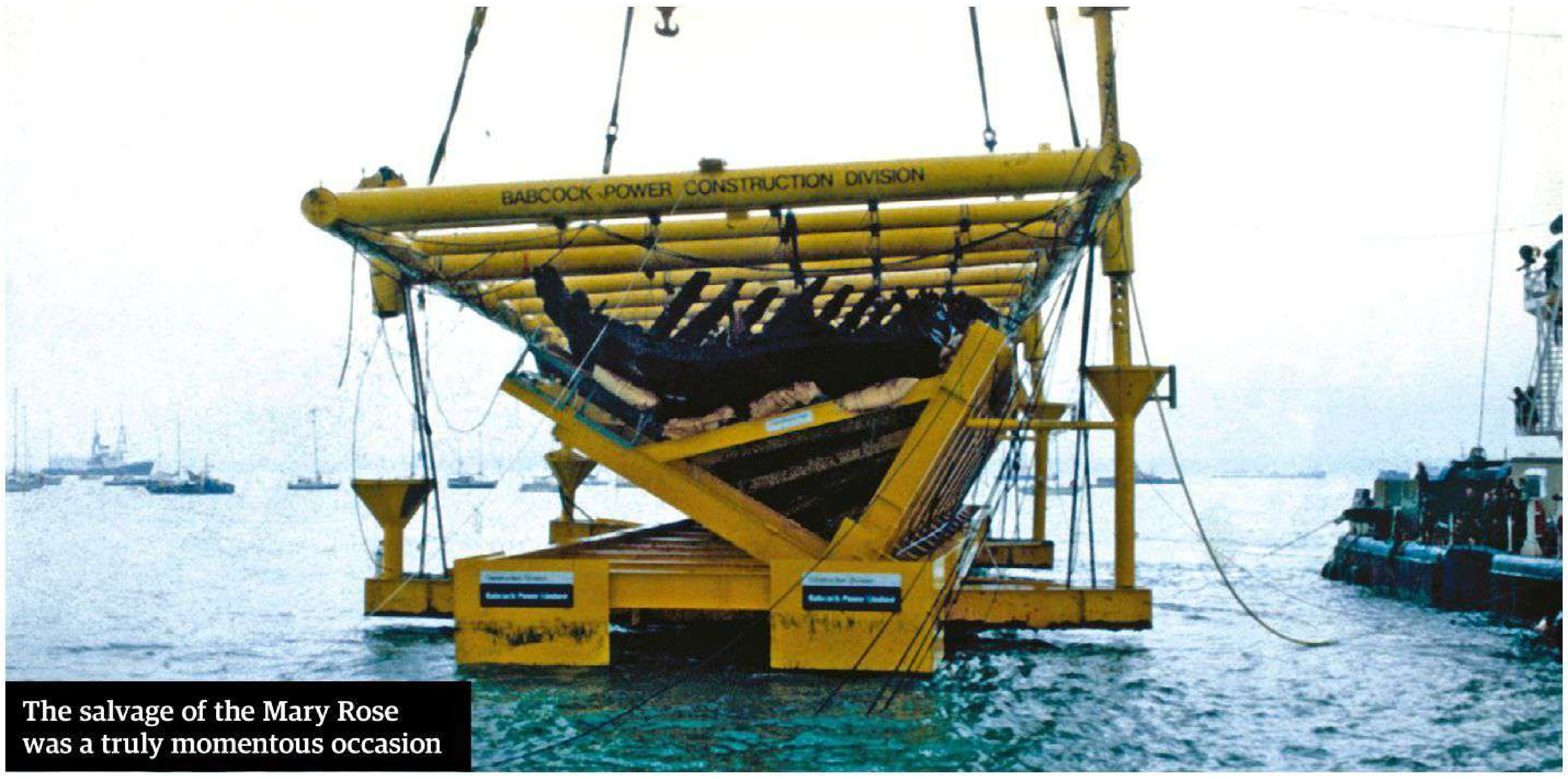
Rose (which was a carrack) sank, a new type of warship design was introduced – the galleon. This solved many of the problems," Dr Marsden told us. The galleon improved upon the carrack in many ways – carracks were wide and unwieldy to steer by comparison, while galleons were narrower and longer, which contributed towards making their handling much smoother. Carracks were also most often designed with 'castles' at, or even overhanging, the bow and stern of the ship, which were raised areas above the deck and were used for work or combat. Galleons, on the other hand, are flush-decked, with any castles located further into the deck area, allowing for a longer, triangular stern, making them more aerodynamic and easy to steer.

As the Mary Rose came just before a watershed change for the design of seaships, it is, for this and many reasons, incredibly useful for archaeological purposes. It is almost unique in its level of preservation and in the fact that it was raised from the seabed in 1982, and has been diligently preserved ever since. Its close proximity to the English shore and its impressive levels of underwater preservation make it perhaps our most comprehensive insight into Tudor life, and life at sea, in the 16th century.

While there is plenty of mystery surrounding the ship itself, it has also helped demystify a great many aspects of the period for historians. As all of the men aboard died on the same day, for the same reason, it provides a rare snapshot of a particular set of people (in this case, a particular profession) at a specific time. Their dental remains have also been incredibly useful for creating a fuller picture of what people ate at the time – one set even had traces of seeds that allowed analysts a specific view into what one man ate on the very day that he died.

Inspecting the remains to this degree may seem somewhat intrusive, disturbing the earthly remains of hundreds of the men who sank with their ship and likely expected to decompose at the bottom of the sea for eternity. But as with most archaeological endeavours, the results arguably outweigh any ethical doubts. 92 of the skeletons found were almost complete, giving unprecedented


Line engraving of the action off Portsmouth during the Battle of the Solent, c.1545



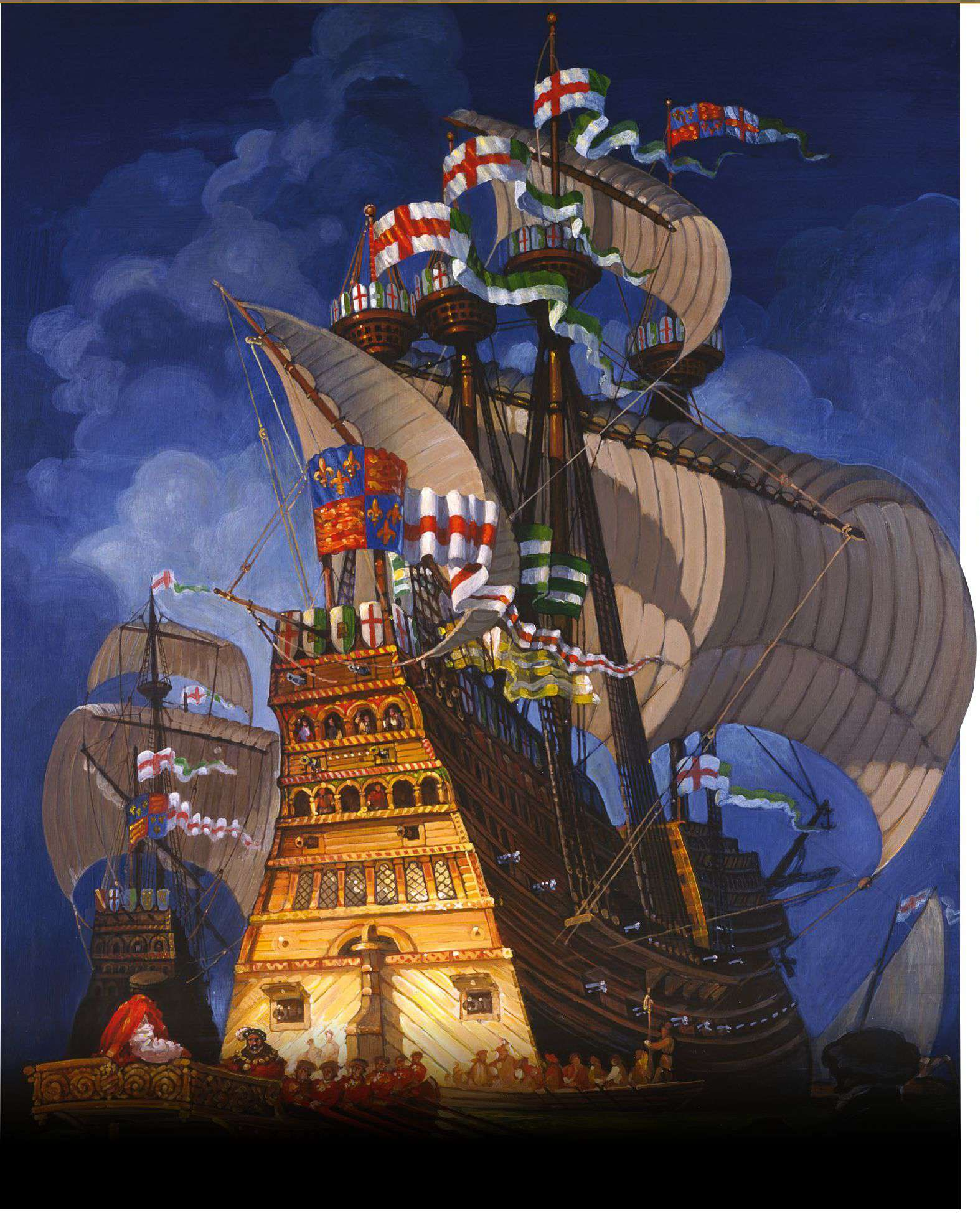
The salvage of the Mary Rose was a truly momentous occasion

'Hatch', the Dog on deck

The prevalence of rats on a Tudor ship called for a domesticated animal to keep the numbers in check. While it may traditionally be thought of as a cat's job, the Mary Rose employed a dog. We know this as the remains of the animal, nicknamed 'Hatch', were found with the ship. Rats are often too big for cats to catch and kill, and those aboard ships were notoriously fierce, making dogs a far more suitable choice. To add to this, Pope Innocent VIII had declared cats unholy in 1484, as a result of their reputation as complicit companions for witches, which contributed to their being considered 'unlucky'. This opinion died out in England some 200 years later.

Analysis revealed the dog was male and an early form of terrier – though breeds as we know them now would not have existed in the same way at this time. He was between 18 months and two years old, and had a brown coat. He was by some way the youngest member of the crew (though some of the remains were identified as being 13 years old).

To determine these particular details about the ship's canine, DNA was taken from one of Hatch's teeth and analysed by experts from the University of Portsmouth, the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, the Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden, King's College London Dental Institute, Durham University as well as the Mary Rose Trust. During these studies, they also discovered that Hatch had suffered from a hereditary disease called hyperuricosuria, a defect that causes kidney and bladder stones.

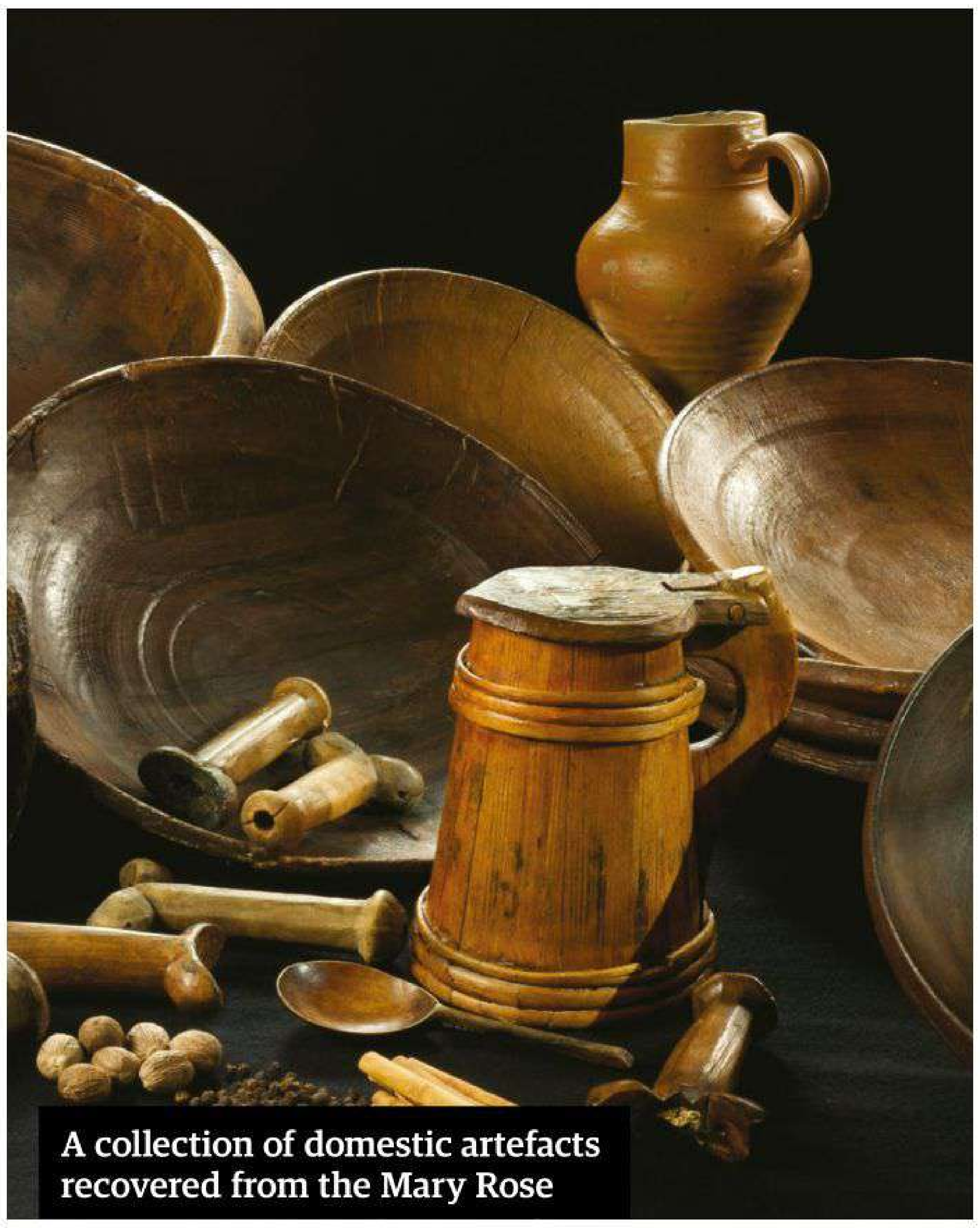


insight into the physique of seamen of this time. And the analysis hasn't slowed by any means in over three decades following the raising of the wreck: researchers continue to look into the blood groups, DNA information and the bone characteristics of the remains today. In doing so, they have identified the remains of the ship's archers, through identifying a particular bone condition, members of the gun crew have been identified by ossification (new bone, grown later in life) as a result of heavy work, and the purser, characterised by the chest of gold and silver coins he was trapped in his cabin with when the ship went down.

Dr Marsden understands well the significance of the archaeological findings on the Mary Rose and told us, "The whole collection gives us a unique view of life on board one of the largest ships of the early permanent Royal Navy." But which of the finds does he think is the most illuminating?

His choice highlights a particularly fascinating conundrum in identifying the remains of a specific person aboard the doomed vessel: "If you really push me to find one item more exciting than the rest, it is a group of silk buttons found with a skeleton in the collapsed sterncastle. Only noblemen were allowed by law to wear silk costumes, so it seems likely that the remains of a nobleman were found." The proximity of the buttons to the remains almost entirely marks them out as belonging to each other, and so it would indicate that the skeleton is that of one of the only men aboard that we can actually name today.

"Only two are historically recorded as being on board: Sir George Carew and Sir Roger Grenville," Dr Marsden told us. "Maybe a DNA study will in future tell us exactly who he was – as was done to identify King Richard III."



A collection of domestic artefacts recovered from the Mary Rose

One of the most significant finds on the wreck was a collection of 137 complete longbows and thousands of arrows, the first such examples to be found intact, offering military historians a startling insight into the importance of longbows and archers in warfare at the time. Analysis of bones revealed that some of the men had developed a bone condition called 'os acromiale', which affects the shoulders and is still found in modern professional archers, so the remains displaying this condition can fairly certainly be identified as archers on the ship.

In their quest to further understand the use of longbows aboard the Mary Rose, scientists and historians (and the well-known English actor Robert Hardy, as the country's most experienced longbow expert) performed many tests on some of the longbows that were found preserved – testing their flexibility and force, to breaking point in some cases. With such a large number of unprecedented exhibits, they were able to fully test the capabilities of this Tudor weapon without too much concern for breaking a specimen in the name of research, and found that the weapons had draw weights of up to an incredible 82 kilograms.

It is this sort of discovery – of which there have been so many since the ship was raised – which makes the Mary Rose such a fantastic historical paradox. Never has a shipwreck answered as many questions about the period it sailed in as the Mary Rose, nor has any shipwreck left quite so many mysteries unsolved. While it may not have been much comfort to the men who died, seemingly without real cause and perhaps at the mercy of a gust of wind, the passage of time has made their deaths remarkable indeed. Without them, we might have a very different picture of the lives of 16th-century seamen, and Tudor life as a whole.

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Hans Holbein the Younger

b.1497-1543

Son of Hans Holbein the Elder, the Younger took up the family profession, later rising to become the king's painter at the court of Henry VIII. His art had fallen out of fashion by the time he died towards the end of 1543.

Hans Holbein the Younger

A king's portrait painter and the king of portrait painters

Words DEREK WILSON

If you were to show people portraits of Richard II, George I or William IV, many would struggle to identify them. Show them the typical picture of Henry VIII – hands on hips, thrusting codpiece, full face, staring belligerently at the viewer – and my guess is that most would recognise it instantly. That makes Hans Holbein junior's portrait of the king one of the greatest pieces of propaganda of all time. This was the image Henry wanted to convey and instructed his court painter to realise. The fact that it still 'works' after almost five centuries is testimony to the amazing talent of a painter who was born in Germany, spent half of his working life in Switzerland and only reached the summit of his career in England during his final decade.

It is not only the royal image that is so compelling. Holbein painted many of the great and good of Tudor England and it is through his eyes that we view the men and women of the royal court. He is our 'photo lens', our visual interpreter of the makers and shakers of what is arguably the most formative period of English history. We see them through his eyes and we cannot escape his interpretation. That in itself would be a remarkable achievement but is very far from being his only accomplishment. Holbein made images of everything. He designed intricate jewellery and painted more-than-life-size murals. He was a master of designs for wood-block engraving and stained glass windows. His chosen subject matter embraced serious religious works and social comment but also included trompe l'oeil jokes. If all this wasn't enough to ensure Holbein's position in the artistic hall of fame, his pictures provide us with a commentary on the tumultuous, creative and destructive age of the Renaissance and the Reformation.

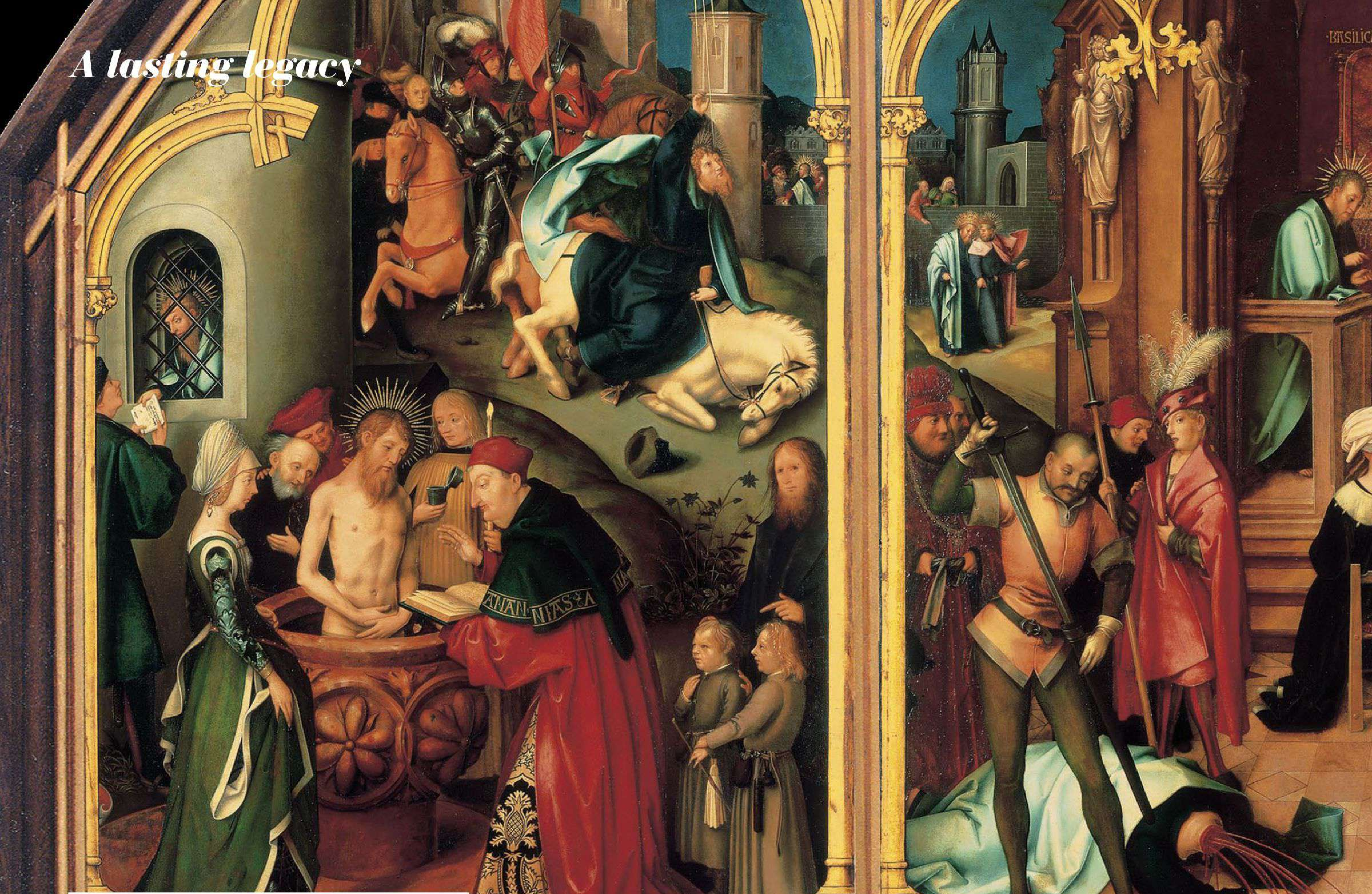
Hans was born in Augsburg in 1497 and born 'into the business'. His father, uncle and brother were all artists. Yet it became obvious very early on that Hans junior, the younger of the Holbein siblings, was possessed of a very special talent.

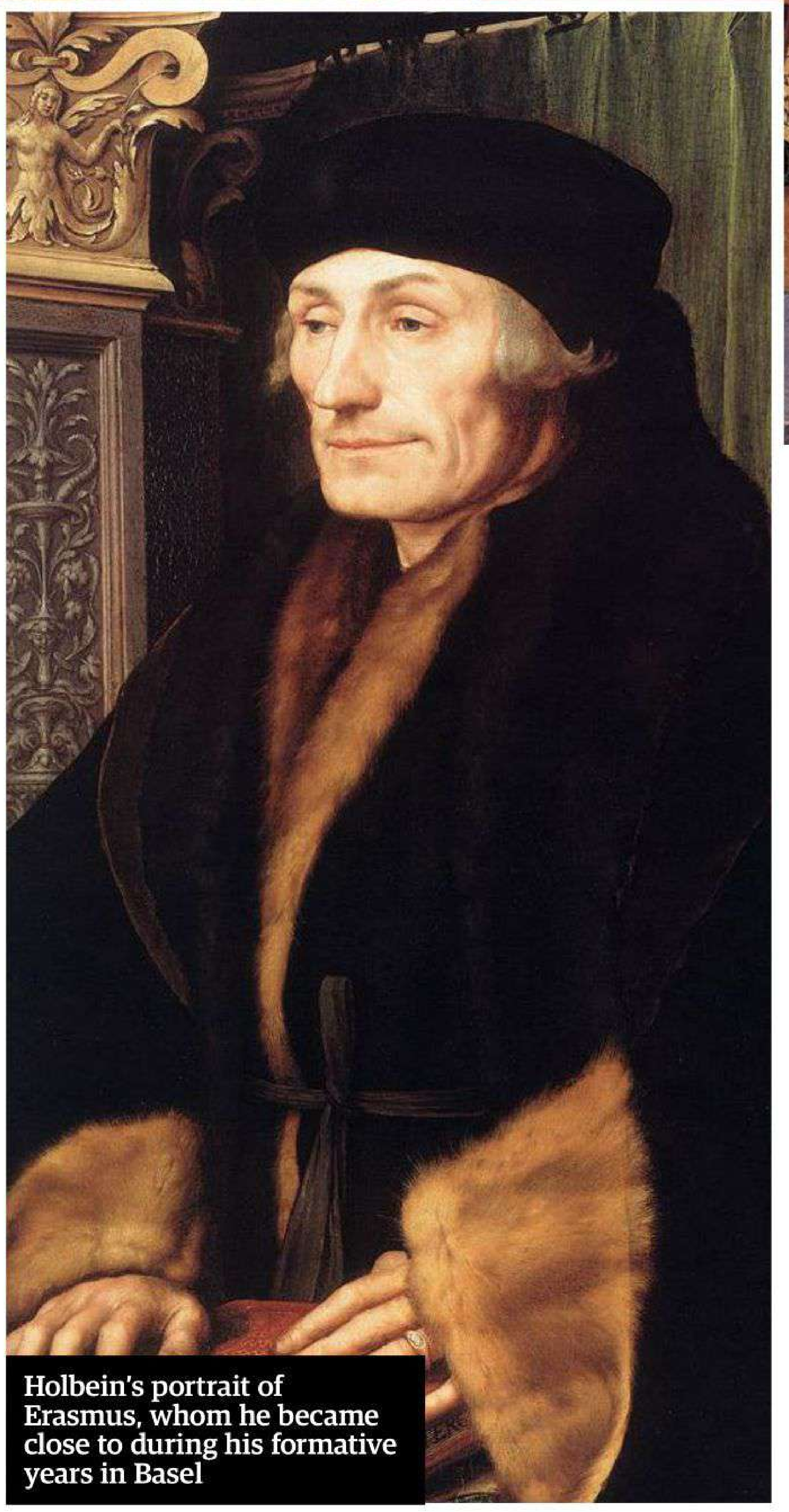
When Hans senior made a series of frescoes on the life of Saint Paul for a nearby convent, he painted himself and his two boys into one of the panels and he depicted himself pointing to his younger son as if to say, 'This is the one to watch'.

> "Another set of dramatic influences arrived from the opposite direction when Martin Luther... launched his attack"

In order to achieve their potential, young Hans and his brother, Ambrosius, had to leave the backwater of Augsburg. They became apprenticed to a painter in Basel. It was a good strategic move – this city on the Rhine was a commercial and intellectual hub situated close to the point where the Swiss Confederacy met France and Germany. This cosmopolitan centre was developing a reputation for toleration and freethinking. In 1515, when Hans and Ambrosius arrived there, the church was the major patron for works of art as it had been for centuries – but times were changing.

Flurries of artistic innovation were crossing the Alps from Italy and in 1517, another set of dramatic influences arrived from the opposite direction when Martin Luther, the Saxon monk, launched his attack on papal authority that kick-started the



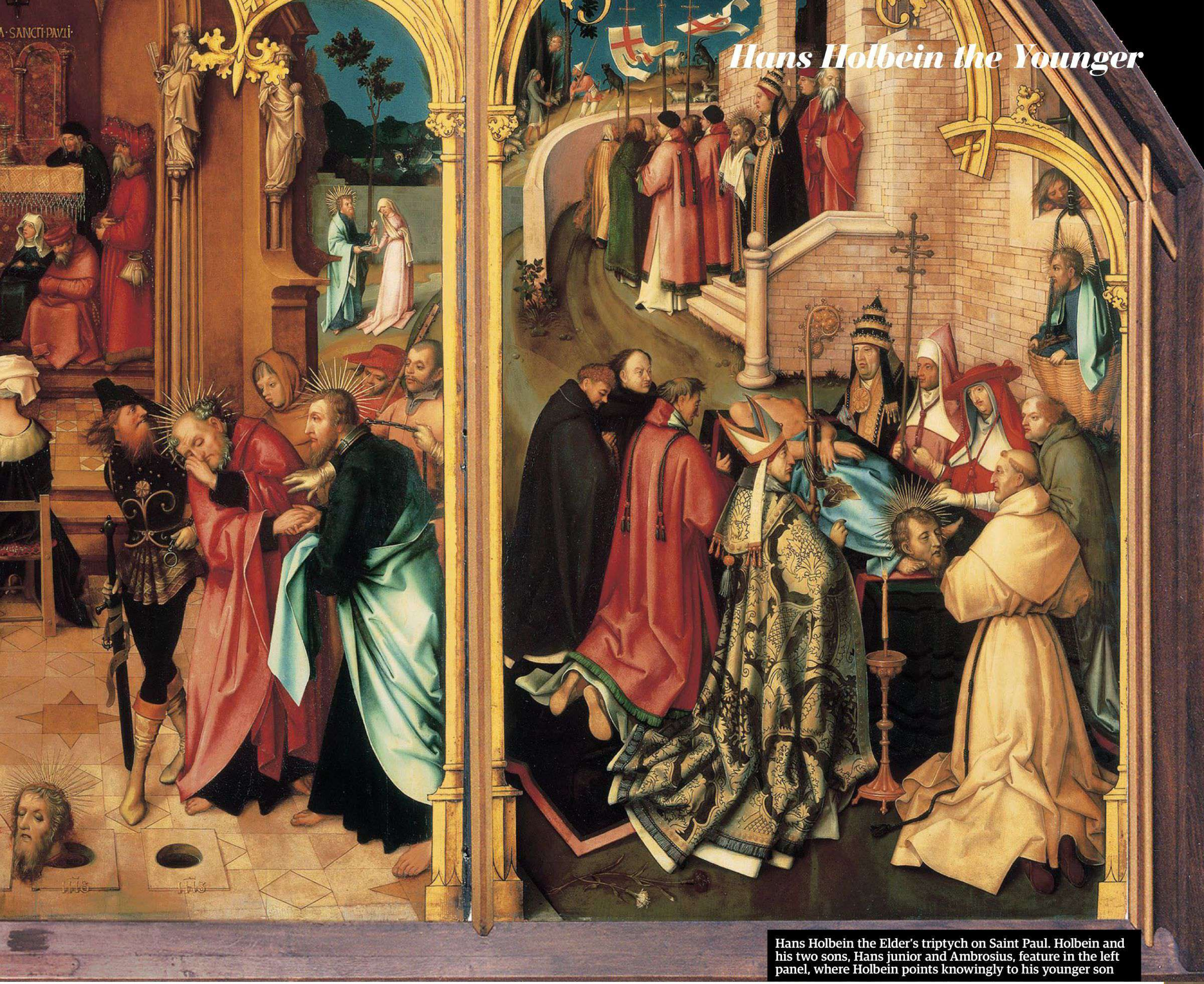


Holbein's portrait of Erasmus, whom he became close to during his formative years in Basel

Reformation. It was no coincidence that Basel became home to Desiderius Erasmus, the leading humanist scholar of the age, whose writings were both brilliant and controversial. Basel boasted a flourishing university and several printworks were kept busy providing the books and pamphlets published by advocates of new and old religious thinking. This was a boon for Holbein. Designing engraved copper plates and woodblocks provided him with a basic income while he developed a reputation and began to attract patrons.

But how did the revolution in religious thought impact the thinking of the young man from Augsburg? He left no statement of his belief, still less of his artistic principles. We have to look at the works themselves to understand his development. From the Renaissance Italians he learned a new realism. He continued to work for religious institutions and pious individuals, creating large altarpieces and small devotional items. Unlike conventional Medieval paintings that relied heavily on symbolism, stylised figures with halos and backgrounds gleaming with gold leaf or radiant colours to emphasise the holiness of the subject matter, Holbein's figures were real-life men and women, acting out their biblical dramas in an everyday, 16th-century world.

Intriguingly, the same artist who was providing such works for Catholic patrons was also designing engravings for Reformation propaganda pamphlets. One, for example, entitled *Christ the True Light* depicted Jesus pointing simple believers to the light of the Gospel while the pope and other church figures were blindly following Aristotle and the ancient Greek philosophers into a pit. This may seem like cynical detachment but the reality is that artists of the 16th century were not the free, creative spirits we know today. They were jobbing craftsmen, selling their talents to patrons and producing whatever those patrons wanted. Holbein's skill, inventiveness and originality kept him ahead of the game – just. Several of his colleagues went out of business. One reason for this was that in the spiritual ferment of the time, many



Hans Holbein the Elder's triptych on Saint Paul. Holbein and his two sons, Hans junior and Ambrosius, feature in the left panel, where Holbein points knowingly to his younger son

patrons were keeping their purses closed. Basel was moving towards the Reformation camp and in 1529, officially sided with that version of the 'New Learning' followed in Zurich.

Holbein didn't wait for the religious tsunami that was about to burst on the city. In 1526, he packed his bags and set off for England. Several monarchs and princes of northern Europe were looking to recruit Renaissance masters to add lustre to their courts. The great Leonardo da Vinci, who ended his life in the service of Francis I of France, was just one of a number of artists who found new patrons in northern lands. Holbein's move was encouraged by Erasmus, who had worked and taught in England and who had friends in influential circles there. Foremost among them was Sir Thomas More, a celebrated scholar, successful lawyer, leading parliamentarian, member of the royal Council, holder of various court offices and – most important of all – confidant of King Henry VIII. Holbein built his business in London as a portrait painter, finding patrons among the fashionable elite. If he thought he was leaving the tumult of Basel for the relative calm of an offshore island, he could not have been more wrong.

In the year of his arrival, two things happened that were to throw the nation into chaos. William Tyndale's banned vernacular *New Testament* began to arrive in England, available to everyone who could read. Alarmed authorities gathered up copies for burning but they were too late – the Reformation was spreading. The other event was Henry VIII's discovery that he was in love with Anne Boleyn. The king's divorce proceedings, his breach with the pope and the spread of the Lutheran 'heresy' dominated national life and even a mere immigrant artisan could not remain unaffected. Just as he was starting to build a useful client base, he was having to consider carefully with whom he could safely be involved. He might have been relieved when, in 1529, his leave of absence from Basel came to an end and he was obliged to return home. What he discovered was that, if anything, things were even worse there.

> "Alarmed authorities gathered up the copies for burning but they were too late – the Reformation was spreading"

The pace of religious change in Basel had been accelerated by radicals who went on the rampage through the city. Erasmus described the chaos to a friend: "There was no one who did not fear for himself when those dregs of the people covered the whole market place with arms and cannons. Such a mockery was made of the images of the saints, and even of the crucifixion... Nothing was left of the sculptures, either in the churches or in the cloisters... Whatever painted pictures remained were daubed over with whitewash, whatever was inflammable was thrown upon the pile, whatever was not was broken in pieces."

Some of Holbein's own works were destroyed in this iconoclastic orgy and there was no longer any prospect of ecclesiastical commissions. Although he reconciled himself to the religious change, he struggled and what made his situation even worse was the knowledge that his reputation in England was now so high that he could fare much better there. Thomas More was now Lord Chancellor, the most powerful man under the king, and Holbein's other 'fans' included Anne Boleyn.

After two and a half years, Holbein returned to England. In 1536 he became the 'king's painter'. There remained left to him but seven years, but in those years he created that image of the Tudor court and its inhabitants that has remained definitive to the present day. Holbein now achieved the recognition that was his due. As well as painting various portraits of the king, he made likenesses of three of Henry's queens as well as his son, the infant Edward.

The impact of the Renaissance on portraiture paralleled its effect on religious art. Iconography was giving place to realism. That is not to say that kings and important people wanted to be depicted, as Oliver Cromwell later insisted, 'warts and all', but there was a desire on the part of sitters to be represented, as we might say, 'photographically'. But just as there is a difference between a good camera portrait and a passport photo, so the best 16th-century portraitists strove to reveal something of a sitter's personality through their physiognomy and there was no one better than Holbein.

The works that have survived fall into three categories - miniatures, drawings and portraits in oils. Miniatures were small, intimate paintings, usually on vellum pasted onto card; keepsakes valued as reminders of loved ones or people held in high regard. The fashion originated in Burgundy and was an offshoot of Medieval craft of manuscript illumination. The technique was not one that Holbein had mastered before his arrival in England. The 17th-century art historian Karel van Mander recorded that Holbein learned this skill from another immigrant, the Flemish master, Lucas Hornebolte (also on Henry VIII's payroll) but that he quickly outstripped Hornebolte "in drawing, arrangement, understanding and execution".

Most (perhaps all) of the drawings that have survived were preparatory studies in which the artist used a variety of tools to capture images that were later worked up into painted portraits. Holbein might actually trace the paper image onto canvas or use the 'pouncing' technique of pricking tiny holes along the outline of the design, laying the paper onto the canvas and forcing powdered chalk through the holes, thus transferring the image.

Having said that portraiture was moving away from iconography, we do need to recognise that patrons, especially royal patrons, were very interested in conveying, through art, a particular image of themselves. For example, the Venetian master Titian made grandiose portraits of the Emperor Charles V, showing him on horseback or wearing armour or holding a fierce-looking

LEX
MYSTERIVM IVSTIFICATIONIS
PECCATVM
ESAYAS PROPHETA
ECCE VIRGO CONCIPIET ET PARIET FIL

A sermon in paint

Understanding the heart of the Reformation through art

The clearest theological statement to which Holbein ever turned his brush was 1535's *Law and Grace*, a retelling on one canvas of the whole Bible story as understood by Luther. It juxtaposes the Old Testament dominated by divine law and judgement and the New Testament, the realm of God's grace and love.

On one side, the realm of 'mors', 'death', we see Adam and Eve succumbing to temptation in Eden, Moses receiving the Ten Commandments from God and Moses showing a bronze serpent to the Israelites, so that they would be saved from the bites of real snakes. The other side balances the composition with the story of Christ, the 'second Adam' or 'Lamb of God'.

At the top, Mary receives the news that she will bear God's son. Christ is lifted up on the Cross as the new means of healing and forgiveness. At bottom right he emerges from the tomb as 'victoria nostra', 'our victory'. In the centre of the composition, a bewildered, naked man utters the words of Saint Paul in Romans 7, "Woe is me; who will deliver me from this body of death" and is directed by the prophet Isaiah from the Old Testament and John the Baptist from the New Testament to turn his gaze towards Christ.

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INRI
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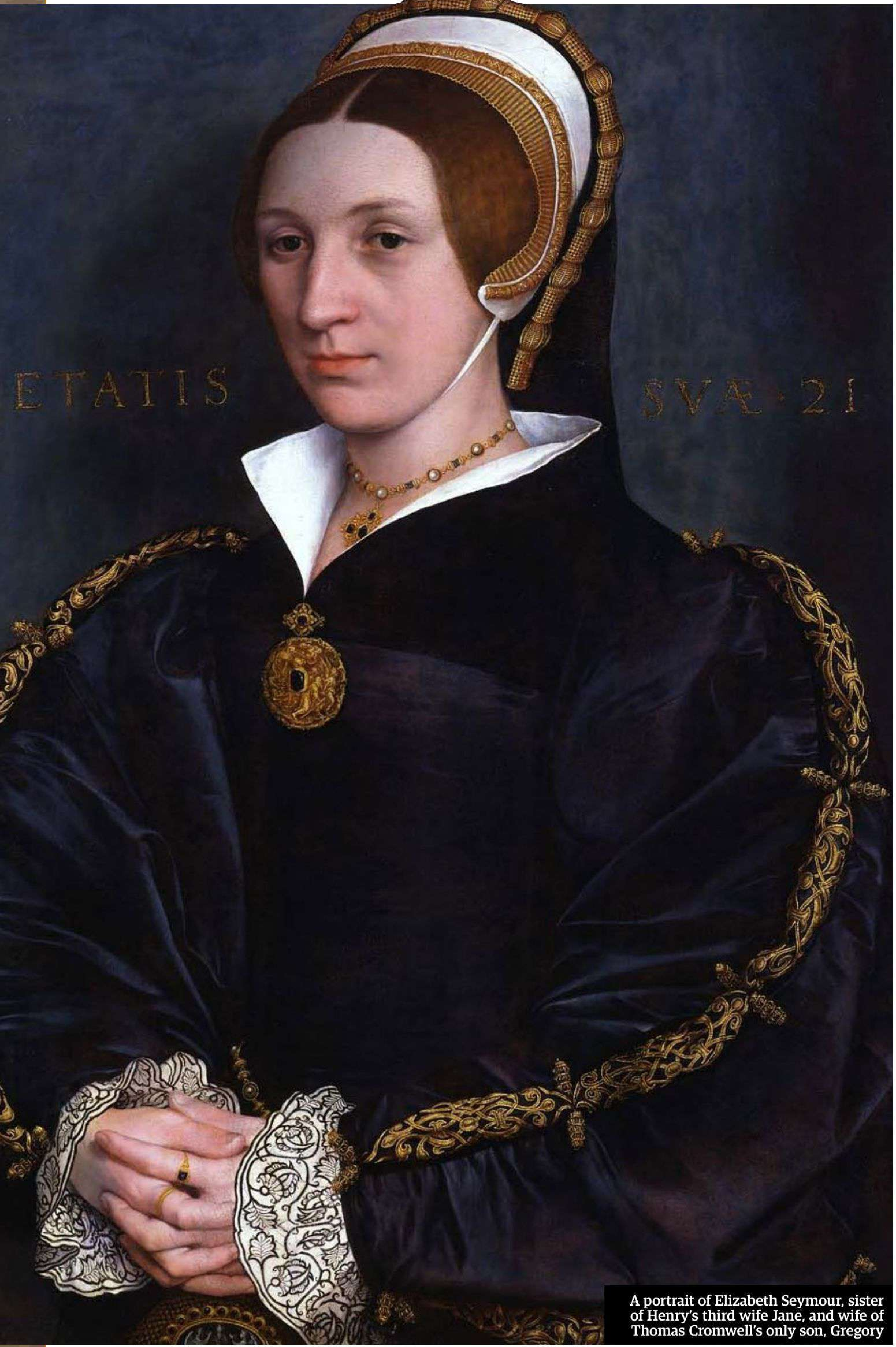
HOMO
VICTORIA NOSTRA
MISER EGO HOMO, QVIS ME ERIPIET EX HOC CORPORE MORTI OB NOXIO ? RO. 7
IOANNES BAPTISTA
IVM . ISA . 7
ECCE AGNVS ILLE DEI, QVI TOLLIT PECCATV̄ MV̄DI. IO. 1

Also known as *An Allegory of the Old and New Testaments*, this religious scene celebrates the roots of the Reformation

> "The depiction of the king in this group portrait became the prototype"



A portrait of Elizabeth Seymour, sister of Henry's third wife Jane, and wife of Thomas Cromwell's only son, Gregory

hound. Holbein's portraits of Henry VIII were less spectacular but, in their way, just as effective. The zenith of royal self-adulation to which Holbein was required to lend his brush was the *Whitehall Mural*, which was created in 1537.

The king had just faced, and suppressed, the worst rebellion of his reign, the Pilgrimage of Grace. Thousands of his subjects in the north had risen in protest at the religious changes being forced on the nation. One response was the commissioning of a life-size group portrait of the king, his parents and his current wife to be painted on the wall of the privy chamber where Henry received ambassadors and other important visitors. This overpowering image showed the figures arranged around a stone plinth bearing a Latin inscription declaring the achievements of the dynasty and of one member in particular. It pointed out Henry VII's military successes and his achievement of internal peace, but then continued to praise Henry VIII's religious reforms:

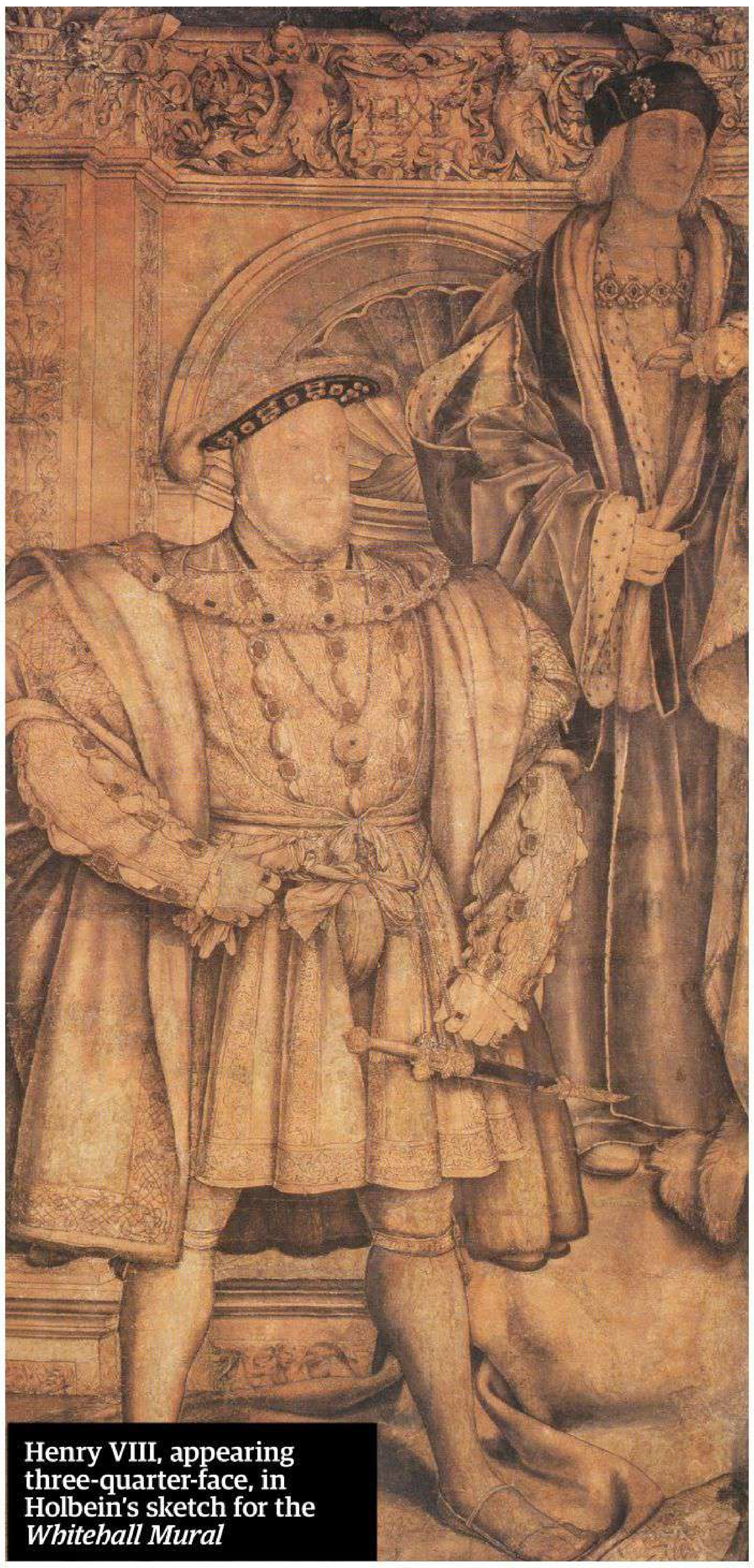
> *"The son, born to yet greater destiny, banished the undeserving from their altars and set up in their place worthy men. Presumptuous popes yielded to his outstanding virtue… true religion was restored."*

The depiction of the king in this group portrait became the prototype for several copies that were ordered either by the king or by sycophantic wealthy subjects. It is the image of Henry that has stood the test of time and we are fortunate in possessing the preliminary drawing Holbein made of the king for this mural. It clarifies the relationship between artist and patron, and it drives home the near-megalomania of the Tudor tyrant. In the sketch the king is depicted, according to convention, three-quarter face. That was clearly unacceptable to Henry. In the finished version he appeared full-face, glaring straight out of the painting at the viewer. It is not surprising that one visitor to the privy chamber declared himself "almost annihilated" by the power of the king's painted presence.

Under such a monarch and in such rapidly changing times, the Tudor court was not a safe place to be. Two of Holbein's early patrons, Thomas More and Anne Boleyn, were literally "annihilated" on the king's order. Holbein was fortunate in winning the support of the man who exercised real executive power under the king for the greater part of the artist's second sojourn in England. Thomas Cromwell was a man with a mission.

Though he had to be careful not to get out of step with his royal master, Cromwell was determined to drive England steadily down the Reformation road. He masterminded the closure of the monasteries and the severing of England's link with Rome. But it was not enough to get rid of the old – he had to win hearts and minds to the new Protestant faith. For this he needed propagandists, men who could preach, men who could write – and men who could draw.

Cromwell turned Holbein's talents to the production of cartoons caricaturing the pope and



Henry VIII, appearing three-quarter-face, in Holbein's sketch for the *Whitehall Mural*

his minions and illustrations for vernacular Bibles. The artist became one 'planet' in a cosmos of satellites revolving around the minister. Perhaps, in the end, he got too close. One of the tasks that fell to Holbein was painting the portraits of prospective brides for the marriage-hungry king.

Cromwell, hoping to forge close links with the Protestant princes of Germany favoured a union between Henry and the sister of the duke of Cleves-Jülich. Holbein was duly despatched to take a likeness of the maiden. She was, as far as we can tell now, comely rather than beautiful, but Holbein did his best to portray her charms. On the basis of this image and the verbal reports of his ambassadors, the king agreed to the marriage treaty. But when he came face to face with the reality of Anne of Cleves, he balked. This miscalculation was the beginning of the end for Cromwell. In July 1540 he joined others who had paid the ultimate price for serving a capricious king.

> "Under such a monarch and in such rapidly changing times, the Tudor court was not a safe place to be"

There is no evidence that Henry blamed Holbein for the fiasco of the Cleves marriage but from this point the artist's star waned. Without his influential patron his popularity diminished. In the autumn of 1543, Hans Holbein 'disappeared' - that is to say there are no more references to him in the records. Writing in the next century, Karel van Mander stated that Holbein died of plague but there is no mention of this in any contemporary writing and no indication of where he was buried. In an age when artists were mere artisans who enjoyed no celebrity status, perhaps the passing of just another immigrant craftsman was not noteworthy.

One of the strange facts about this artist who left for us the abiding images of Henry VIII and his court is that the major part of his work was also almost lost. We are indebted to a few later, discerning critics for that portrait gallery with which we are so familiar. Without them, the works would have disappeared just as the artist's remains seem to have done. It was Sir John Cheke, tutor to the boy king, Edward VI, who made a point of salvaging all Holbein's drawings from his studio after the artist's death.

A few years later, Holbein's genius was 'discovered' by the great Elizabethan miniaturist, Nicholas Hilliard, who was born four years after Holbein's demise and only knew him by his works. Hilliard proclaimed him 'the most excellent painter and limner … the greatest master truly in both those arts after the life that ever was'. The leading 17-century connoisseur, Henry Howard, Earl of Arundel, collected every example he could find of Holbein's work and ended up owning 44 works by the master.

It was thanks to these few discerning disciples that the bulk of Holbein's surviving works have come into the royal collection and been preserved as a record of the people and events of one of the most remarkable periods in the nation's history. More than that, they have left a rich assemblage of paintings and drawings by the German/Swiss artist who was the father of English portrait painting.

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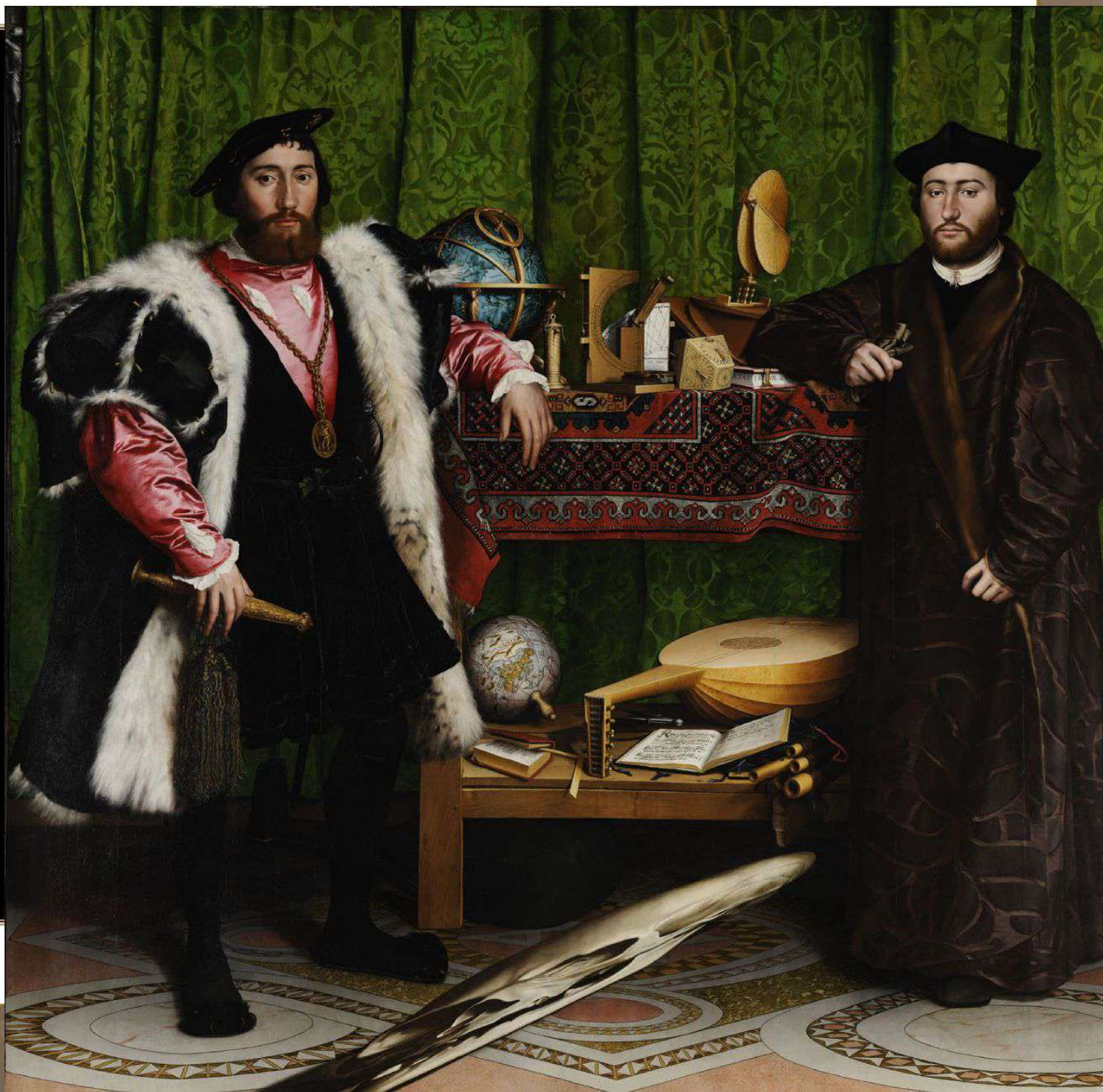
A reflection on the times

Holbein's painting entitled *The Ambassadors* was more than just a double portrait

This unique and remarkable work by Holbein was ostensibly a double portrait of two French ambassadors, Jean de Dintville and Georges de Selve, who were sent to negotiate with Henry VIII in 1533. It flattered the sitters by associating them with the civilised arts of music, geography, astronomy and mathematics. This represents the diverse culture of the Renaissance but it also speaks, in a series of symbols and enigmatic hints, of the dislocation associated with the Reformation. For example, the book displayed is by Luther and the music is of a German hymn. However, the lute that should give expression to this music has a broken string. The foreground of the painting is dominated by an extraordinary distorted skull, which can only be properly viewed by looking sideways along the canvas.

Holbein seems to be pointing out that all human accomplishments and pretensions are ultimately overpowered by death. Yet probably the most important symbolic statement is the one most easily missed. In the top left-hand corner and almost totally obscured by the curtain there is a crucifix. Is Holbein telling us that all the discoveries and disputes of the Renaissance and the Reformation were distracting people from what really mattered?



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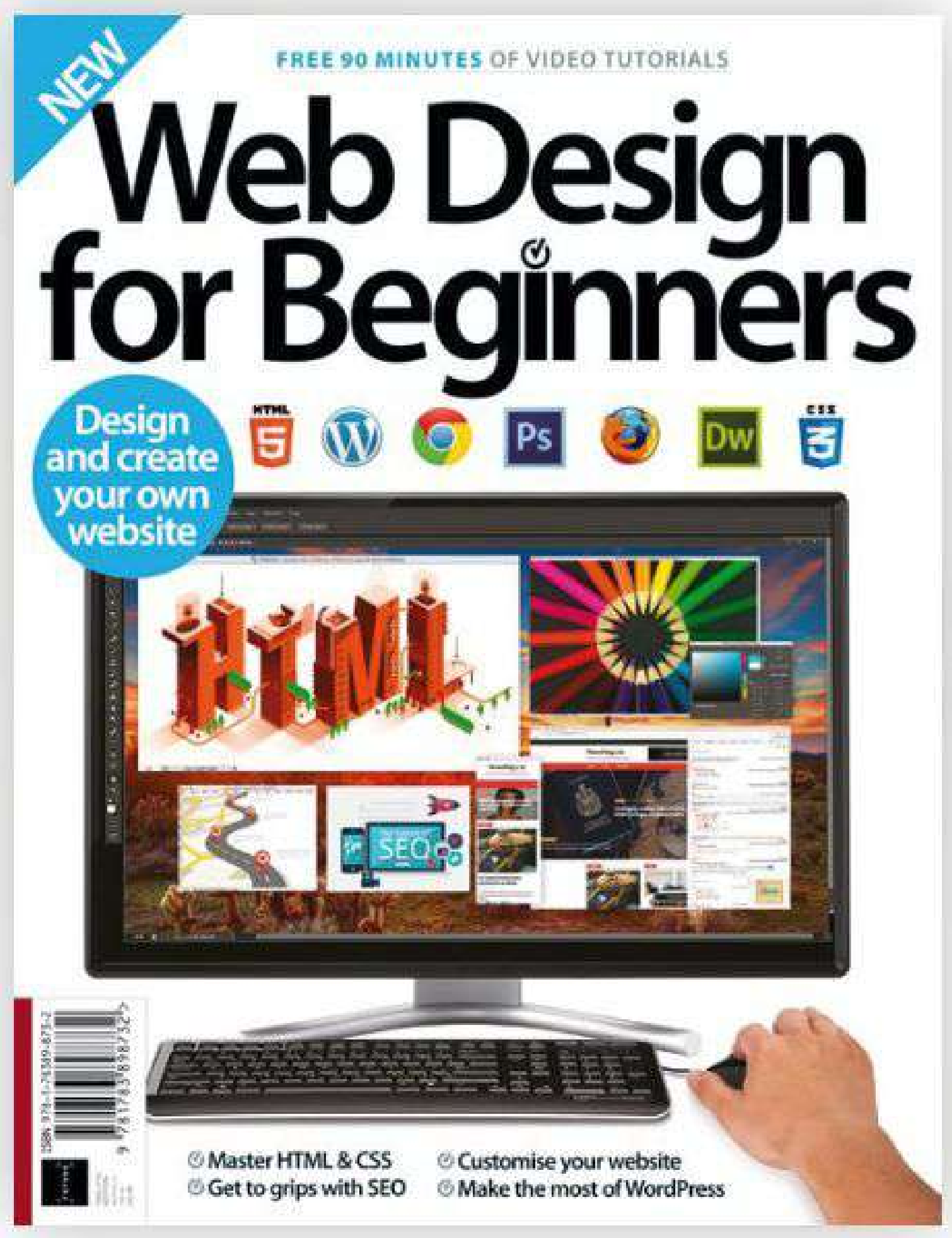
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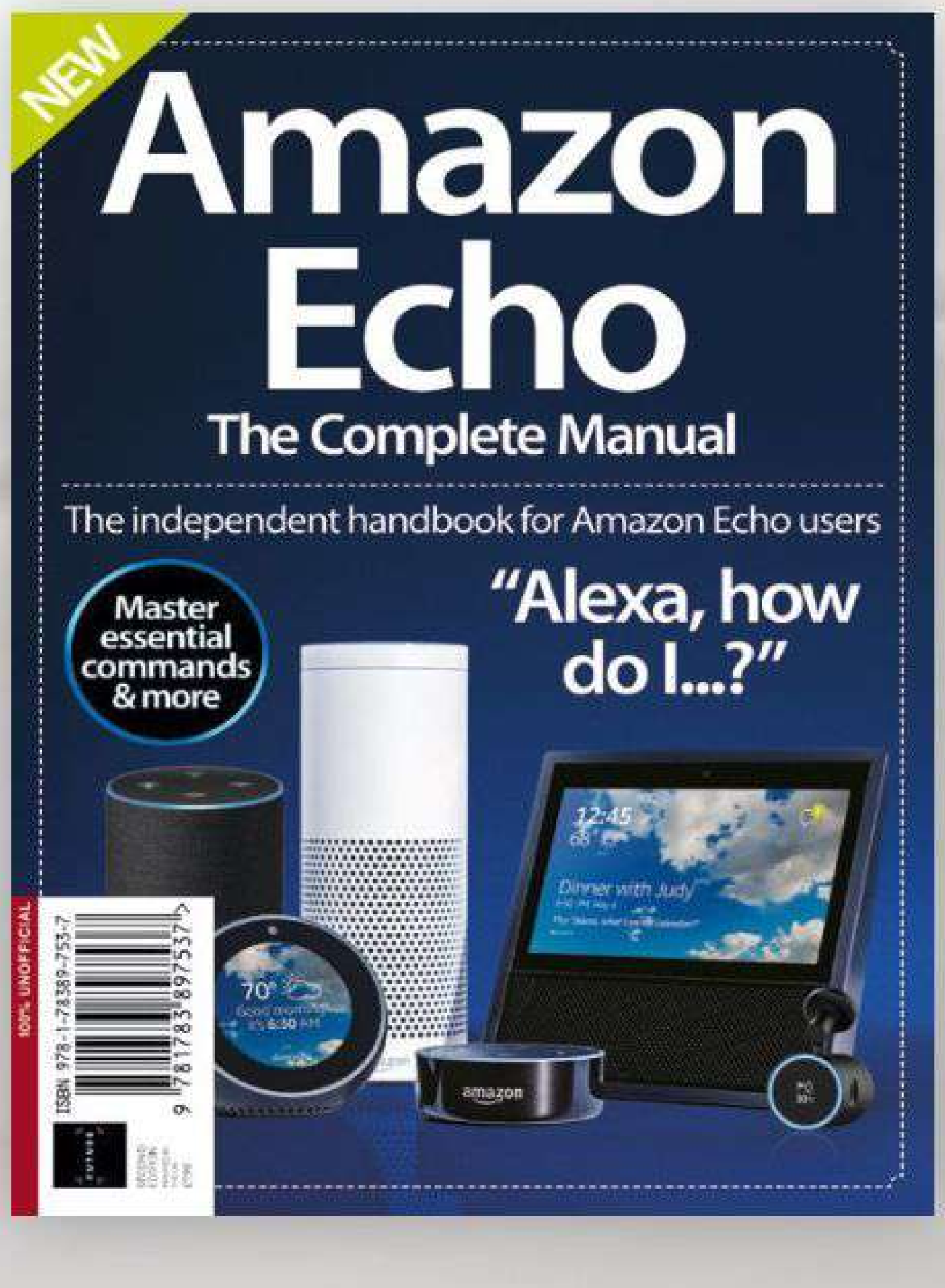
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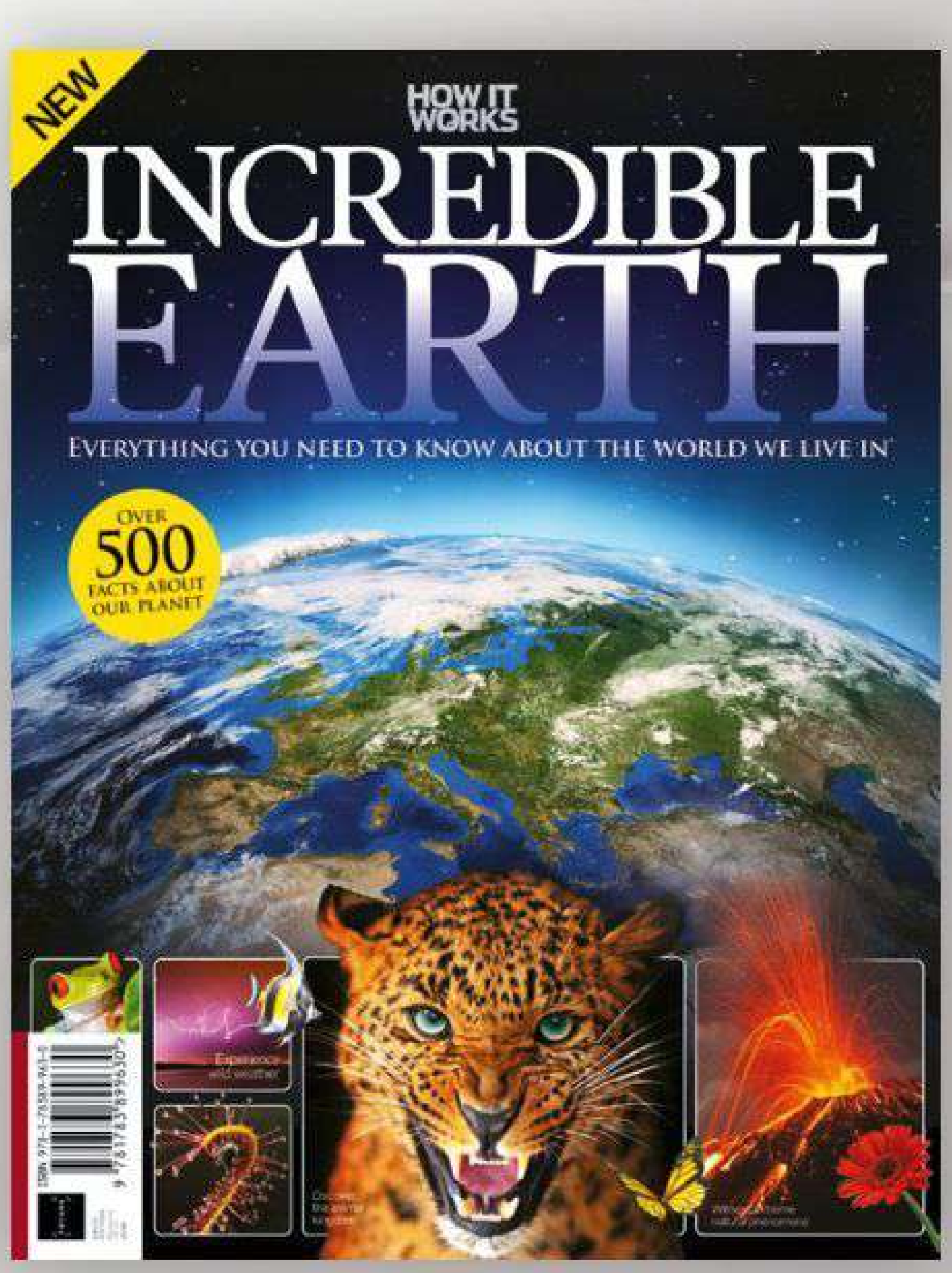
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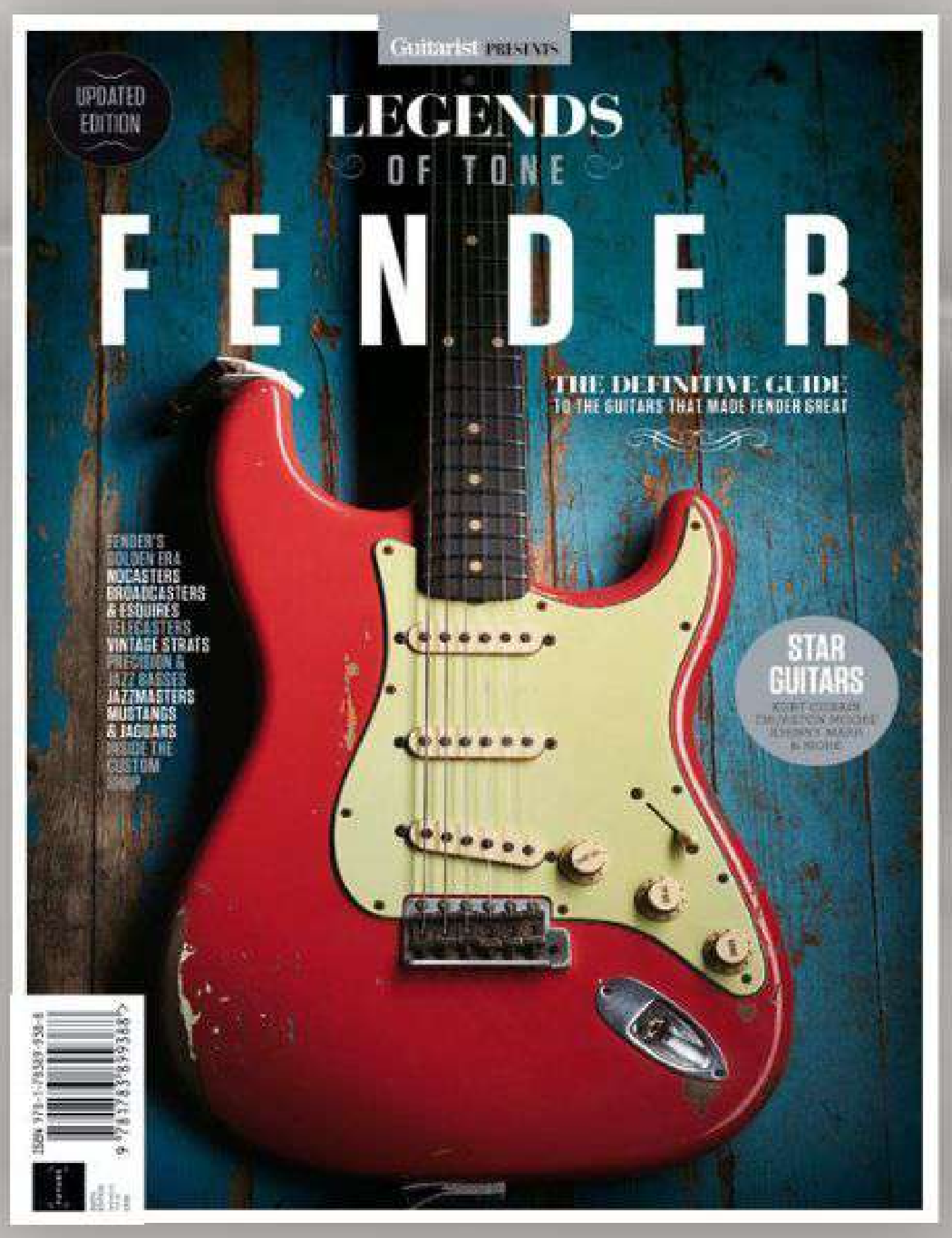
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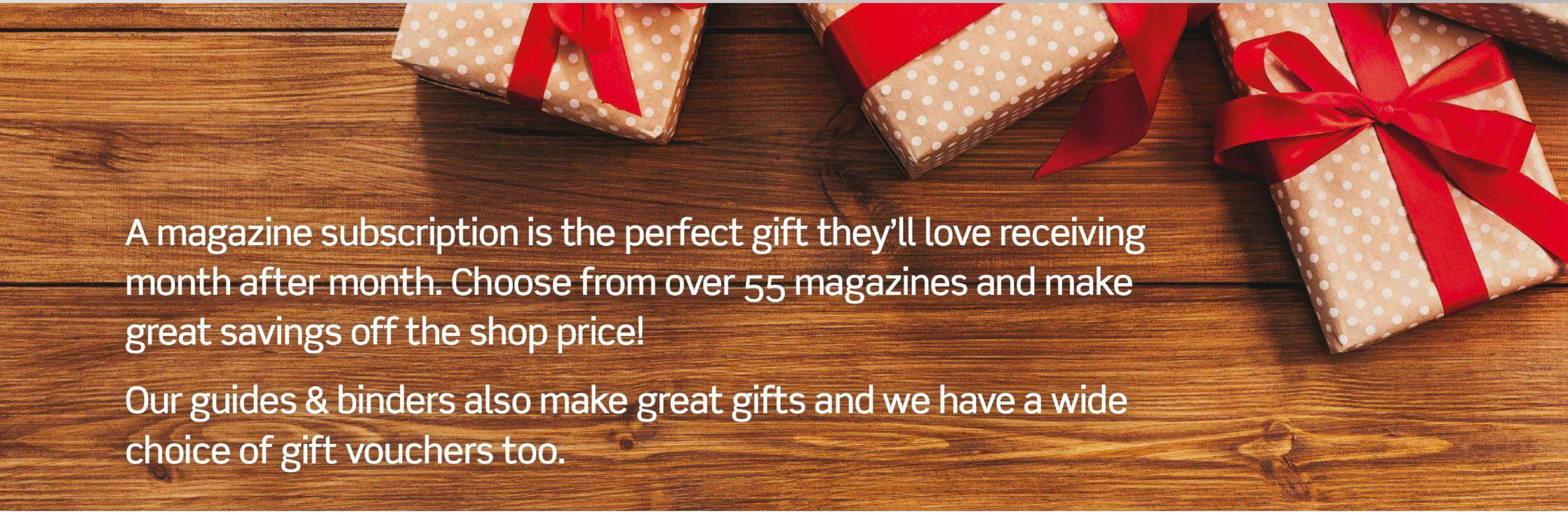

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